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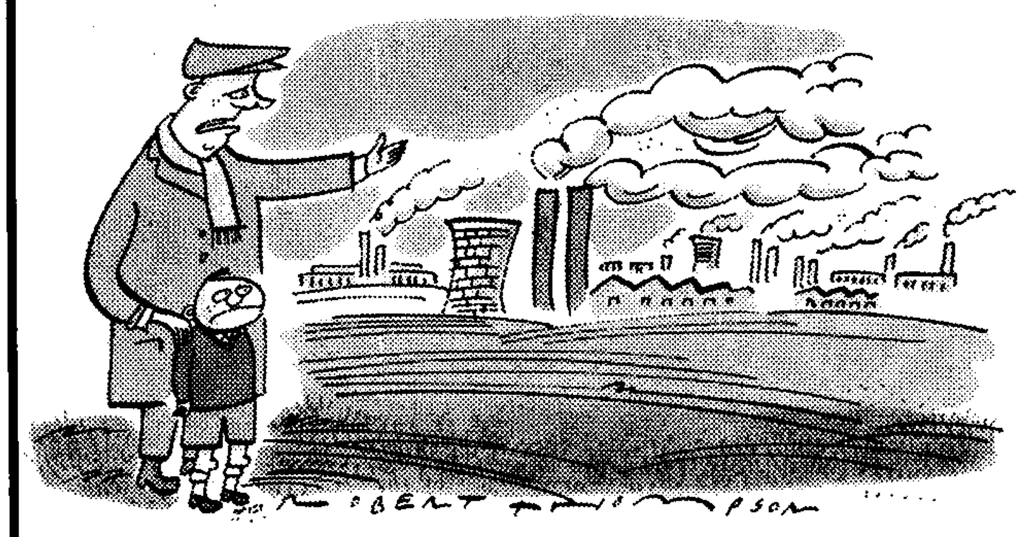

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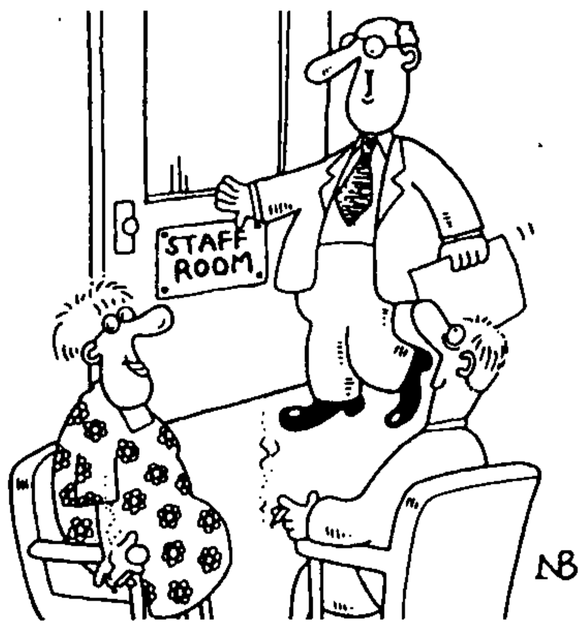

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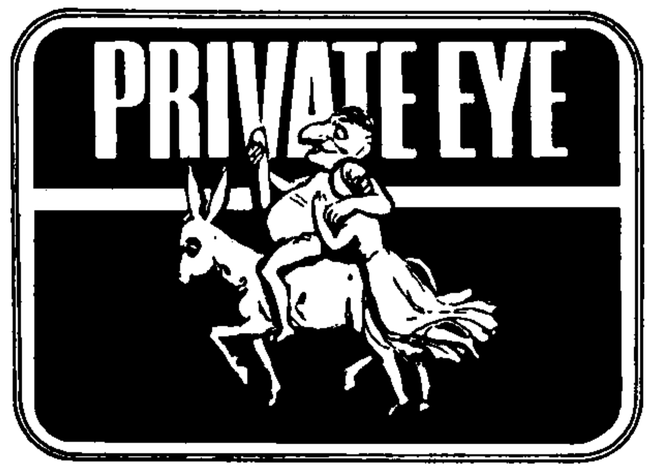

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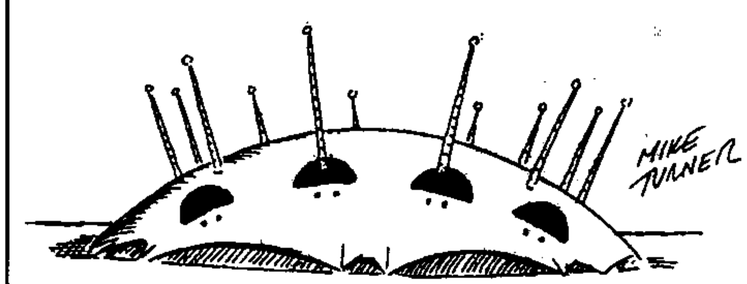

Beatles Book Storage Depot

AT a Downing Street reception four months ago, Cherie Booth was overheard murmuring to Sir Richard Branson: "We're going to have to do something for you."

What might this "something" be? As the *Eye* noted at the time: "Various possibilities come to mind: allow Beardie to run the national lottery..." And so it came to pass, despite the almost universal assumption that Camelot would have its licence renewed.

Although the Blairs ought to be jubilant, in fact they are seething with rage. Downing Street certainly wanted Branson to win, in the belief that some of his "success" and "popularity" (*sic*) would rub off on Labour. But it wanted a simple, clear victory; not the bizarre semi-decision announced by Dame Helena Shovelton, which has been universally ridiculed and condemned. Still less did it want a judicial review, which may uncover embarrassing evidence contradicting the government's fervent denials that it tried to influence the commissioners.

As ever when Blair finds himself in a mess, his first instinct is to seek a scapegoat. The hapless victim this time is to be culture secretary Chris Smith. No sooner had the Rev Blair returned from his holidays than a "senior Downing Street source" gave a briefing to the *Mail on Sunday*: "Mr Blair is furious over the way this has been handled, particularly by Chris Smith who should have seen the warnings. The lottery has been left high and dry. The fall-out electorally is bad if we are seen as incompetent."

This is an extraordinary attack, especially in the light of Alastair Campbell's recent assurances that No 10 would never dream of badmouthing cabinet ministers. But it may backfire on the PM. To defend his own integrity, Smith may eventually have to reveal who really applied political pressure on Branson's behalf – and thus precipitated the fiasco. The culprit is believed to be a fortysomething ex-barrister and sometime singer in the rock band Ugly Rumours...

ONE reason the government can no longer call its foreign policy "ethical" is the lenient treatment doled out to a Romanian state arms company found to be selling landmines at a government-sponsored arms fair last September.

Seven types of mine were advertised in a Romtechnica brochure on display at the Defence Systems and Equipment International exhibition in Surrey. A salesman confirmed that at least one model of mine was available for sale.

The results of a ministry of defence investigation into the case were passed on to the crown prosecution service (CPS) in January, and a spokeswoman there confirms inquiries are ongoing. "We have received information and asked for further information to be gathered for us – that is in the process of being done, so no decision has yet been made."

The CPS may be interested to learn that even though the investigation is still open, Romtechnica was back selling its wares at this year's Farnborough airshow.

EDUCATION secretary David Blunkett says that Clive Leach, his new appointment to chair of the West Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council, will bring a "businesslike" approach to the job (see *Eye* 1009).

Evidently Blunkett believes Leach has learnt his lesson since he quit the chief executive chair at Yorkshire Tyne Tees Television in the mid-1990s, leaving the company with a crippling franchise payment and having presided over hundreds of job losses.

What could have convinced Blunkett that Leach is the man for the new job? Not Leach's businesslike donation of more than £5,000 to the Labour party in 1998, that's for sure.

JOHN PRESCOTT's new white paper on transport has been widely praised for its "massive new investment in the railways". And a glance at the figures in Annex 1, adjusted for inflation, shows just how massive Prezza's generosity is.

Investment for the evil Major years when rail collapsed (1991-1996): £1.2bn per year.

Investment for the great Prescott years-to-come of rail revival (2001-2010): £1.2bn per year.

ALERT viewers of the voyeuristic *Big Brother* may have noticed that one of the programme's directors is a certain Martin Lord.

Lord, a close friend of such beautiful people as Dale Winton and Lily Savage, worked at Anglia TV as the director in charge of *Vanessa* until he was abruptly kicked out in 1997. The reason for the sacking, which his bosses strove desperately to keep secret, was revealed i n *Eye* 920: while assembling the title sequence for a programme about getting up in the morning, Lord hid a miniature camera behind the pedestal in one of the men's lavatories at the Anglia studios, the aim being to film a bare bum being lowered on to the seat.

How pleasing to learn that, thanks to Channel 4, he has at last found his *métier*.

OH, YEAH? Yesterday morning, a furious Mr Bovey rang Richard Desmond, the publisher of the magazine, and demanded to know why they had been embarrassed by such a stunt.

They felt it was beneath their dignity and claimed the magazine had duped them.

A friend said: "They both feel utterly humiliated and completely stitched up. The picture makes them look dreadful. It is very damaging." — *Daily Mail*

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Life imitates Art, pt 94

P. EYE 25.8.2000

DAYS after Noel Watson's cartoon appeared in *Eye* 1009, Dr Yvette Cloete, a blameless paediatrician, was driven from her home in south Wales.

As all the newspapers reported, a vicious and moronic mob of illiterates, believing her to be a paedo*phile*, had surrounded her home and daubed the prefix "paedo" on her front door and porch while she slept.

NEWS

EVEN NatWest seems embarrassed about its massive programme of job cuts and branch closures. Its current advertisements promise that customers will still be able to visit real banks rather than be forced to use cheap (for the bank) internet services; and branches will not apparently be converted into boutiques. So who can still speak up for the bank's redundancy programme?

Step forward Labour employment minister Andrew Smith, who is sending thousands of employers a brochure that talks up NatWest's job cuts as "good practice". In Smith's "Age Diversity in Employment" guidelines, he claims: "Our goal is to build a country where all are valued and where everyone has a chance to play a full part." Well, everyone except former NatWest staff, that is.

NatWest's "job reduction programme" called "new directions" (as in "Can anyone direct me to the nearest dole office") gets the thumbs up from Smith because NatWest didn't just sack old people. According to the Labour minister, the programme was good because "the number of staff departing is in line with the number of job reductions"; the bank "has retained a motivated workforce which feels valued and therefore more willing to contribute to business success"; and, most bizarrely, "their corporate image and reputation have been enhanced".

All good PR for NatWest but scant comfort to staff on the dole or customers looking for a handy branch.

THE *Lawyer* has reported that a prominent barristers' chambers has been obliged to pay £40,000 compensation to a former employee for racial and sexual harassment. Fortunately for the chambers – 4 New Square in Lincoln's Inn – the details have not so far emerged.

It seems that a black secretary rang in one day to say that she was sick. Later that day, a bumptious chambers clerk tried to telephone her but got her answering machine instead. As he put down the receiver he didn't realise that the machine was still recording, and a male voice was plainly heard on the machine complaining stridently that if there was one thing he couldn't stand in life it was a black person with a posh voice.

The unhappy secretary did not return to work at all but sued for racial harassment. There was nothing the chambers could do but pray that the incident would not be made public and fork out whatever the plaintiff wanted. The *Eye* understands that the sum was in fact £60,000.

The top lawyer in the chambers is Mr Justice Jackson, and the head of chambers is John L. Powell. Oddly enough the standard legal text book on one of the more contentious current legal issues, professional negligence, is by Jackson and Powell; and the book is edited by five top barristers, all based at 4 New Square in Lincoln's Inn. The textbook, the first port of call for many a young barrister, goes into the most careful detail about the grave risks to professional people, including lawyers, of slipshod practices by their employees which can lead to all sorts of extravagant claims.

Meanwhile the erring clerk remains in his job – which is more than can be said for the secretary.

"Nope, my eyesight's definitely gone"

THE Benefits Agency is being accused of systematically cheating some of the poorest and most vulnerable out of much-needed funds.

Whistleblowers suggest that people with disabilities and the elderly in need of care are being denied compensation to which they are entitled when the agency delays or cocks up their disability living allowance or attendance allowance benefits.

Firstly clients are specifically not told that they might qualify for compensation because Benefit Agency documents suggest "this avoids raising false hopes." Conveniently it also denies clients any right to claim because nowhere in Benefit Agency literature are they told that there is a compensation system, let alone what the criteria are.

Secondly, according to insiders at the agency's Blackpool headquarters, the daily computer print-out that highlights those who may qualify – apparently hundreds a day – is not properly acted upon. In the filtering process many are simply crossed through and binned, so the vast majority of cases simply fall by the wayside.

A department of social security spokeswoman, which is responsible for the Benefits Agency, denied that potential claims were being binned without proper scrutiny, suggesting the insiders did not understand the filtering process. She said many were screened out because payments overlapped with others like income support and there was a risk of double payment. A special payments unit staffed by seven people dealt with an average of 134 compensation cases a month, making payments in just over half the cases.

As a service to readers, here is what internal Benefits Agency documents say: "The customer may be entitled to compensation if, due to an official error, payment of benefit is delayed." Staff are advised to consider cases where there has been break in payment of three months or more or a claim has been delayed for eight months or more. With special payment to the terminally ill the period is reduced. Those who feel they have suffered such delays should contact the Special Payments Team (SPT) Room A110D, Lobby E, Warbeck House, Warbeck Hill, Blackpool.

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Hackney Gazette

BEFORE opposition from customers and water regulator Ofwat forced Kelda to abandon its scam of selling off its debts to a mutual society, the company made a great play of how independent the new mutual would be from Kelda (aka Yorkshire Water).

After all, although it retained personal shares in Kelda, hadn't the mutual's proposed directors resigned from their posts with Kelda to front the totally independent venture (*Eye* 1006)?

To find out how independent the mutual would have been, customers might like to talk to Richard Ackroyd at Yorkshire Water Services HQ in Leeds. Richard Ackroyd, who "resigned" as the company's head of regulation and capital investment in June to become "managing director designate" of the ill-fated "Yorkshire Water Mutual", is now safely back behind his desk.

SCOTTISH POWER subsidiary Southern Water has been forced back to the drawing board after admitting that its new £120m waterworks would not necessarily prevent a recurrence of the disastrous flood in Folkestone in August 1996 (*Eye* 1008).

The scheme promised to reduce the risk of flooding from the sewers to once in 50 years. But when it emerged that the improvements were based on an outdated computer model of the sewer system, Southern Water turned to engineering firm Bullens to report on the problem. Despite pressure from residents, the water company refused to release the full report, which contains details of 700 households in Kent, Sussex and Hampshire whose owners do not necessarily know their homes are at risk of flooding.

When local MP Michael Howard wrote to Southern Water requesting disclosure, managing director Ronnie Mercer replied that the board had reached a unanimous decision not to put the full report in the public domain. Howard has now asked the water regulator Ofwat to consider whether it can compel the company to release the report.

Street of Shame

THE departure of Martin "Rottweiler" Clarke as editor of the *Daily Record*, albeit involuntary, places the already precarious reign of Rebecca "Fluffy" Hardy as *Scotsman* editor even further under threat.

Andrew Neill, the *Scotsman*'s editor-in-chief, has rapidly lost patience with Hardy. Instead of stemming the tide of departures at the Holyrood rag, she has seen four key business hacks, including the business and financial editors, walking out in the run up to the launch of rival paper *Business AM* later this month.

Elsewhere Tim Luckhurst, who edited the *Scotsman* for a nanosecond before illness forced him to hand over to Hardy, has been promoting the cause of his former boss. In an article for the *Guardian* media section reminiscing fondly about Clarke's tyrannical rule at the *Scotsman* before he was poached by the Mirror Group for the *Daily Record*, he writes: "Martin should team up with that other great iconoclast, Andrew Neil. Between them they could run a very good title, but probably not in Scotland."

As Neill shows no signs of heading south, Clarke might be just the man to replace Fluffy, leaving only the question of whether la Hardy's pride will allow her to downshift to a features role.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Devolution is a failure. Scotland's problems will only be solved by London... Power was brought home so that it could be used... It hasn't happened."

— Tim Luckhurst, former editor of the *Scotsman* (briefly), the *Independent*, 21 August

"Devolution has worked. The nationalist squirrel has been neutered and life can begin afresh... The feeling is growing that devolution has delivered sufficient power to make a difference."

— Tim Luckhurst, *Glasgow Herald*, 21 August

THE *Eye*'s favourite photographer Jason Fraser (*Eyes passim*) continues his mission to take pictures of famous people in as flattering a light as possible.

Unfortunately there wasn't much flattering light around when Liz Hurley allowed her beach sarong to slip just as Jase was strolling by, revealing an unsightly patch of cellulite which he was obliged to snap and sell to the *Mirror*.

Meanwhile Fraser's pics of Iggy Pop and his buxom girlfriend have appeared in *Mayfair*, one of Paul Raymond's sordid little porn mags. Perhaps poor deluded Fraser was under the impression that it is a magazine for high society.

"Lisa, I think my wife suspects"

THE *Grauniad*'s media expert Roy Greenslime has repeatedly pondered the amazing success of the *Daily Star* in Ireland. Now the *Times*'s media section has joined in, running an interview with the rag's editor Peter Hill, and marvelling at how this "pathetic" newspaper has thrived.

"It is thus a nice earner for the Labour peer – even if Lady Hollick is said to have banned the organ from the family home," Jasper Gerard wrote. "So what's the secret? 'It's a mystery,' said Hill, modestly, and without mentioning the leap in sales in the Republic of Ireland that accounts for much of its growth."

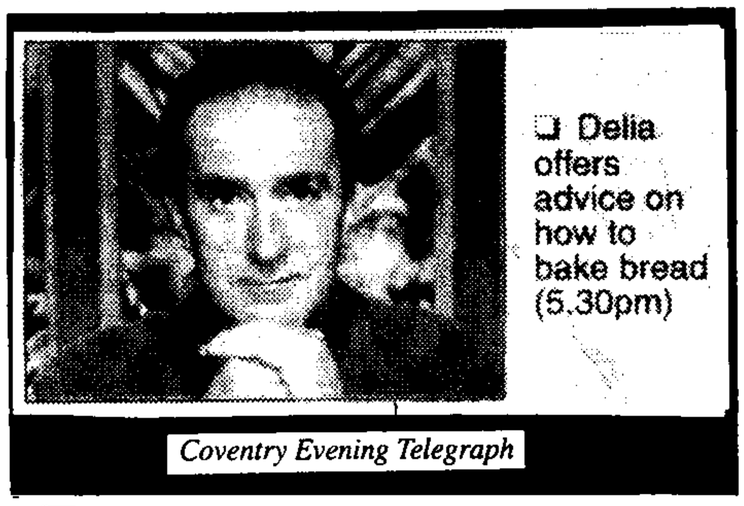
Actually, there's no great mystery: each week the Irish edition of the *Star* reprints huge chunks of copy from the *Daily Express* and, especially, the *Daily Mail*. Sometimes these are given a cursory rewrite, sometimes pasted down virtually unchanged. The biggest losers are freelances who sell a story to the *Express* or *Mail* and unwittingly have their material used to boost sales of the *Daily Star*.

Take Daniel Fox, who provided the *Mail* with a graphic full-page eyewitness account from Kabul of the executions carried out by the Taliban. It concentrated on the decapitation in a football stadium of Mohammed Daoud by a man called Maulvi Mohasil.

The next day, exactly the same piece appeared in the three editions of the *Star* which are printed in Dublin by Lord Hollick and his partner (and would-be purchaser of the *Express* group) Tony O'Reilly. This time, however, the story was allegedly written by "Clement D'Art in Kabul."

This is a fake byline used by *Star* subs as they go about their daily task of lifting circulation by lifting copy. There is also a large repertoire of more Celtic-sounding bylines for the feature pages, where most of the piracy takes place.

Hacks at the *Express* might well be surprised by how much of their work is purloined to boost the ABC ratings of its downmarket sister paper. No doubt Clive Hollick doesn't mind, as it's all money in the bank for him; but Lady Hollick is probably wise to keep the rag out of her house just the same.



❑ Delia offers advice on how to bake bread (5.30pm)

Coventry Evening Telegraph

THE *Independent* (prop: Dr Tony O'Reilly) has devoted much space to attacking fat cats who get huge financial rewards for relative failure. Luckily, however, it has yet to notice the £200,000 success bonus for one Ivan Fallon, who reaped the reward despite a poor reaction to the public offering of a minority stake in a company called iTouch.

Veteran *Eye* readers will remember that Fallon was working as business editor on the *Sunday Times* when he began work on an allegedly objective biography of Tony O'Reilly. On completion, he sold the serial rights to his own paper. But Murdoch's executives were less than thrilled when, after the first glowing instalment had appeared praising O'Reilly to the skies, Fallon announced that he'd accepted a job offer from the subject of his book.

He duly set off for South Africa, where O'Reilly had bought several newspapers with the approval of the ANC. But earlier this year he resurfaced in London as chairman of iTouch, another of O'Reilly's many ventures, offering £70m worth of shares to punters. The company, which enables the masses to download and read the Janet Street-Porter column on their mobile phones, was valued by O'Reilly and his chums at Merrill Lynch at an incredible £325m.

In the run-up to the share-sale, the *Independent* titles carried numerous reports on the benefits of mobile phones, why Finland is booming thanks to mobile phones, why mobile phones are easier to read than newsprint, etc. Cynics might wonder why, if iTouch was going to be such a success, O'Reilly would wish to dilute his equity by selling part of the company now. Whatever the reason, the City simply laughed. The issue price was promptly slashed – but, thankfully, Fallon's success bonus remained intact.

HACKWATCH

That August In Full...

IT'S a perennial problem: you come back from your summer hols, after a couple of weeks with no television or newspapers, and find yourself as baffled as a high court judge by the currency of everyday conversation. What is *Big Brother*? Who on earth is Grant Bovey? As a service to Tony, Cherie and all other returning holidaymakers, the *Eye* has teamed up with Britain's most authoritative broadsheet, the *Daily Telegraph*, to provide an instant update on the main news.

1 August: Mick Jagger witnesses the nude stage debut of his former wife Jerry Hall. When not naked, Miss Hall was "mostly wearing fashionable Agent Provocateur underwear", the *Telegraph* reports. "At the end he gave her polite and thoughtful applause." Elsewhere the paper reveals that the actress Sophie Ward has undergone an unofficial "marriage ceremony" with her long-time lesbian lover Rena Brannan, "followed by a party at the Groucho Club in London for their friends and family".

3 August: A momentous headline adorns the *Telegraph*'s news pages: "I Really Don't Miss Having Sex With My Ex, Says Liz Hurley." Miss Hurley also reveals that she eats in bed and is fond of dogs.

4 August: Much of the front page and the whole of pages 2 and 3 are cleared for pictures of Gordon Brown's wedding to Sarah Macaulay. "The bride wore a Louise Kennedy shantung silk dress and frock coat," the *Telegraph* reports. "Mr Brown was in a dark blue suit by Timothy Everest, who also designed the footballer David Beckham's wedding outfit."

5 August: The Queen Mother's 100th birthday fills pages 1, 3, 4 and 5. "This birthday has done us all a bit of good," an editorial observes.

7 August: The *Telegraph* devotes a whole page to the impending marriage of PR woman Aurelia Cecil, a former girlfriend of Prince Andrew, to a businessman called Rupert. "Girls don't come much more eligible," it reveals. "She has looks, legs, intelligence, pedigree, connections and a rogue scattering of nose freckles." Elsewhere there is a judicious editorial on the TV programme *Big Brother*. "We can't help ourselves," it concludes. "Are we being prurient? Yes. Salacious? Undoubtedly. But for sheer entertainment, this is hard to beat."

8 August: Andrea McLean, a GMTV weathergirl, has joined the cast of *Chicago* for a special performance: "She donned her fishnets yesterday morning to line up with the chorus for the steamy number *All I Care About is Love*." There is a large photo of Andrea in her fishnets, legs akimbo.

9 August: Jerry Hall strips off on stage again, watched by "a host of celebrities" including John Fashanu, Lord Alli and Luke Goss, late of the pop duo Bros. The *Telegraph*'s theatre critic, Charles Spencer, complains that the number of column inches devoted to Hall's performance "is getting absurdly out of hand". In deference to his views, the paper confines its coverage to a mere half-page, plus two photos.

10 August: "It's a Baby Boy For Zeta Jones and Douglas." The child (7lb 7oz) is to be called Dylan – though as the *Telegraph* explains, "the child was named after the writer Dylan Thomas in recognition of the actress's Welsh roots, and not, as some American reports suggested, after the singer Bob Dylan".

12 August: Madonna has given birth to a baby boy, Rocco, at an "undisclosed location" in the United States. The child's father, Guy Ritchie, is said to be delighted.

16 August: David Bowie's wife, the model Iman, has given birth to a baby girl weighing 7lb 5oz at an "unnamed location" in the United States. Mr Bowie assisted with the delivery, cutting the umbilical cord.

17 August: An important full-page interview with Sophie Ellis-Bextor, whose "infectious dance single" *Groovejet (If This Ain't Love)* is expected to top the charts this weekend. The *Telegraph* notes approvingly that, as a double-barrelled former pupil of Godolphin and Latymer school, Miss Ellis-Bextor is almost certainly posher than the "undignified" Posh Spice.

18 August: "Nasty Nick" has been evicted from the *Big Brother* house, the *Telegraph* announces on its front page. There is another lengthy article on page 3 to mark the historic event.

19 August: A further development: "Nasty Nick" claims that he does not deserve the acrimony heaped upon him. His comments fill half of page three.

21 August: Memories of Nasty Nick are fading fast as his replacement – Claire Strutton, 25 – settles in. The *Telegraph*'s reporter suggests that her arrival may improve the "sexual chemistry" in the house.

22 August: Anne Heche, the Hollywood actress, has confirmed that her lesbian affair with Ellen DeGeneres is over. A close friend of the couple informs the *Telegraph* that the relationship "wasn't working" and had "simply run its course".

23 August: The former England rugby captain Will Carling has had therapy to come to terms with his "love rat" image, the *Telegraph* reports. Carling, who was branded a heartless cheat after leaving Ali Cockayne, explains that he visited a counsellor to learn more about himself.

24 August: Anthea Turner, the television presenter, has married her boyfriend Grant Bovey at Guildford register office. Pam Ellis, a friend of Miss Turner from Australia, and Terry Shand, a friend of the groom, acted as witnesses. "It was very emotional," Mr Bovey discloses.

25 August: Elizabeth Hurley is to appear in *The Human Face*, a four-part television series which combines scientific research with "comedy sketches". Meanwhile, a *Telegraph* editorial censures Greg Dyke for moving the *Nine O'Clock News* to 10pm. By squeezing out serious news coverage, he is "yielding to the forces of philistinism" and "dumbing down".

26 August: The *Telegraph*'s front page is dominated by a huge photograph of Brad Pitt with his friend Vinnie Jones, at the premiere of their new film *Snatch*. Elsewhere, the columnist Daniel Johnson resumes the attack on Greg Dyke's "dumbed-down news" at the BBC. From the moment that "the most philistine media mogul of modern times" was appointed director-general, he thunders, it was clear that "dear old Auntie would be recast as Liz Hurley minus the safety pins".

28 August: Yet another lengthy polemic against the dumbed-down BBC. "It may be August," Alan Judd writes, "but it comes to something when the BBC's lead news story is its decision to put back one of its own broadcasts by an hour... If one of the BBC's own initiatives is a big news story, it makes you wonder what it thinks news is." Very different from the sober old *Daily Telegraph*, which led its front page last Friday with "Dyke Scraps Nine O'Clock News on TV".

29 August: The *Telegraph* reports that Robbie Williams's three-week holiday in St Tropez has been sadly marred by a bar brawl, though Mr Williams was uninjured. It notes that Geri Halliwell, the former Spice Girl, was not present.

30 August: The front-page news is that Britt Ekland has tripped on a piece of watermelon shortly before presenting a heavy-metal music award in London. "Although in severe pain," the *Telegraph* adds, "she insisted on carrying on."

So now you know...

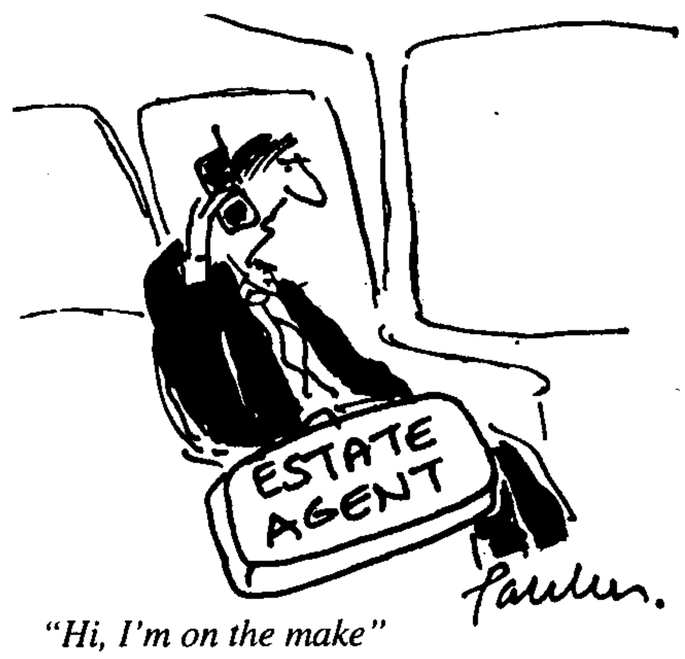
THE political editor of the *New Statesman* Steve Richards bade a memorable farewell to colleagues as he prepared to pack his bags for the *Indie*.

He was so overcome by the warmth and generosity expressed towards him at one of the regular *NS* lunches, held in the magazine's Victoria offices, that the tired and emotional Richards was obliged to use his wastepaper basket to contain an unexpected technicolour yawn.

Fortunately the magazine's generous proprietor Geoffrey Robinson was on hand to order a taxi to ferry the weary hack home.

EYE-SKY

"Supergoals.com is the best football site on the web, Mr Openshaw..." — Shameless plug for Rupert Murdoch's football website, smuggled into the "Striker" comic-strip in the *Sun*.



"Hi, I'm on the make"

ONE of the most eagerly awaited conference season score-settling books is *Observer* columnist Andrew Rawnsley's *Servants of the People*.

In it he is expected to reveal the identity of the senior Downing Street aide who claimed that chancellor Gordon Brown was "psychologically flawed".

This brutal attack on Brown was made at the height of the Blair-Brown feud, which left major casualties including Peter Mandelson, Geoffrey Robinson and Brown's spin doctor Charlie Whelan.

That the claim was made, there is little doubt: *Observer* hacks recall "Yawnsley" taking the call and loudly repeating the relayed words as they were spoken. Alastair Campbell has been equally forthright in denying that the deliverer of the dirty deed was him. Unfortunately for Campbell, however, other lobby hacks distinctly recall him earlier making just that claim – that Brown was "psychologically flawed" – to the *Mirror*'s then political correspondent John Williams.

Realising he had a major scoop, Williams immediately lobbied *Mirror* editor Piers Morgan to run with it. But "Moron" lived up to his usual dismal standards and failed to spot the hottest political story of the year. Williams' colleagues believe that Campbell's failure with the usually supine *Mirror* then led him to make the fateful call to "Yawnsley".

ANOTHER casualty of the animus between Tony Blair and Gordon Brown was the chancellor's namesake, the then chief whip Nick "Newcastle" Brown, who was deemed to be too close to the chancellor and, dangerously for Blair, too popular with the PLP.

The former chief whip's role in the Blair-Brown stand-off is likely to be reexamined both by Yawnsley and the *Independent*'s equally yawnsome Donald MacIntyre. MacIntyre is having a second stab at being Peter Mandelson's semi-official biographer. His first ended with his entire opus being pulped as a result of court action from an aggrieved former Labour press officer. Copies of the book were last seen heading north in a skip, courtesy of refuse company Biffa, destined for a tip in Coatbridge.

Assorted spin doctors and wannabe Blairites hope "Yawnsley" and MacIntyre will use their forthcoming books to blame Nick Brown for leaking details of Mandelson's famed "home loan" from then treasury minister Geoffrey Robinson. They claim it was "Newcastle" Brown who leaked the details to political hack Paul Routledge.

Robinson's generosity formed the centrepiece of "Router's" savage biography of Peter Mandelson. Or rather it should have done had his incompetent publisher not sent Router's proofs to his old *Independent on Sunday* office in the Commons.

The claim that "Newcastle" Brown is responsible for Mandy's fall from grace – the latter was obliged to resign as trade and industry minister shortly after details of the Robinson loan were made public – has enraged the real source, Charlie Whelan.

The former spin-doctor lost his job in the fall-out from the "home loan" affair and wears his battle colours with some pride. But could Whelan have known without Geoffrey Robinson telling him? Sadly, followers of the great battles at the Blair court may have to wait until Robinson's book, *The Unconventional Minister*, is published in the autumn. Could it be true, as some believe, that Robinson blew the gaffe on Mandy in a fit of pique, as the latter failed to invite him to a "house warming" party, particularly as the house in question had been bought by Robinson? And there is another unanswered question: why did it never cross the mind of Mandelson's close friend, Tony Blair, that the Prince of Darkness was living well beyond his means?

JUST FANCY THAT!

"With an average of two beheadings a week, the [Saudi] kingdom probably has the highest execution rate per capita in the world, a spokesman said."

— The *Times*, 15 August

Number crunching

£40,000,000

amount set aside by Tony Blair's government for legal-aid funded litigation following implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights

£40,000

estimated annual earnings of Cherie Booth, QC, a founder member of Matrix chambers, which expects to be very busy following implementation of the convention by her husband's government

SWALLOWS are not the only ones preparing to migrate. A number of special advisers in the Downing Street policy unit are restive and some have flown already.

These include John Cruddas – selected as Labour candidate for Dagenham – and Faz Hakim, who wearied of the endless politicking and has fled for the quiet berth of merchant bankers JP Morgan.

But what of the smaller fry? In his shortlived role as an Islington councillor, James Purnell, enthusiastically joined with other council colleagues such as Stephen Twigg in drawing up a list of thought crimes for left-wing colleague and one-time parliamentary hopeful, Liz Davies. Now Purnell is looking for a parliamentary seat. Unlike Davies, however, he is unlikely to have to undergo a local selection meeting and then appear in front of Labour's ruling NEC. Purnell, along with other Blair favourites, are banking on a plum safe seat to be vacated just before the election as local worthies are pushed upstairs to the Lords.

BEFORE joining the Downing Street policy unit, Purnell had been a researcher for Tony Blair in opposition and had undertaken special media projects for the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) s ponsored by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

He went on to do a stint in the Birtite BBC corporate affairs department, which under director-general John Birt became a hang-out for some of Blair and Mandelson's protégés. The ex-Reverend Chris Bryant, an ultra-Blairite improbably selected earlier this year as Labour's candidate for the Rhondda Valley, joined Purnell. They in turn were joined by Ed Richards, a former researcher for Gordon Brown who today is employed as a special adviser with responsibility for defining the "big picture" for Tony Blair's second term. He does so from a cottage in the Black Mountains and at the taxpayers' expense.

FORMER British Airways PR director David Burnside, who left BA after the Virgin dirty tricks scandal, complains of smear tactics being used against him in his bid to win the South Antrim by-election on 21 September where he is defending a 16,000 Ulster Unionist majority (see *Eye* 1005).

The smear tactics amount to a handful of anti-Burnside letters sent to the offices of an Antrim newspaper. The letters were intended for publication, but when the local residents whose names and addresses appeared on the letterheads were contacted for verification, they denied writing them.

An infuriated Burnside wrote to RUC chief constable Sir Ronnie Flanagan. He claims the letters are fraudulent and an "insult to the democratic process". The serious crime squad is now investigating, causing only the most seasoned cynics to observe that the RUC has better things to do with its time now that murder has returned to the streets of Belfast.

ROBERT "Slobabob" Wareing, the litigious MP for Liverpool West Derby, has been boasting of late that he is the only Labour MP in the country to have been reselected via the democratic process.

The very old "Old Labour" MP will be into his 70s after the next general election, and cannot disguise his glee at confounding attempts by the Millbank machine to unseat him.

Wareing, a Charlie Drake lookalike, greatly embarrassed the Blairites in the early months of the Labour government over what they considered to be his "pro-Serb" stance and the fact that he was suspended from the Commons for a week for failing to declare an interest.

The prime mover in the "Dump Wareing" campaign was Peter Killeen, Labour's north-west regional organiser. Wareing's victory had added piquancy in the knowledge that he secured the nomination against competition from Killeen's partner, Stan Jones.

MILORD Sainsbury of Turville, our esteemed science minister, officiated at the launch of *Engineers for Sustainability*, a report produced by a consortium of "young" engineers.

No doubt he paid particular attention to the lengthy section on "Ethics and Values", which has many brave assertions such as this: "Sustainable development is as much about ethics and values as it is about science and technology... Values become easier to recognise if it is asked, for example, what is engineering trying to achieve at its best? And ethical principles are revealed if it is asked, what is considered unacceptable in pursuit of these goals?"

It augurs well for the future if young engineers carry such principles with them through their careers. But are these high ideals are shared by the consortium's "patrons" who helped to pay for the report? They include Anglian Water, Railtrack and Balfour Beatty, not hitherto known for letting ethics stand in the way of their quest for profits. With Balfour Beatty, for example, the words "Turkish" and "dam" somehow spring to mind...

'Backbiter'

POLICE 5

MORE blushes for home secretary Jack Straw as police concerns over the cost of introducing the new European radio standard Tetra to the police radio network (see *Eye* 1003) are backed by the European commission.

The contract to provide the new network – intended to combine voice and data transmission, which are separate at present – has been awarded to the Quadrant consortium, including BT, Motorola and Nokia. The contract is one of the largest ever private finance initiatives, worth an overall £2.5bn.

Home office minister Charles Clarke promised a £50m subsidy for the first year of the public safety radio communications project (PSRCP) in September 1999. Under pressure from police forces demanding to know how they are supposed to meet the rest of the costs themselves, Clarke announced a further £500m in grants over the next three years, to be deducted from the total police grant provision.

Although the introduction of Tetra is already underway, it is not yet capable of the full data transmission required of it. Industry commentators are amazed that the home office is willing to spend so much on a system which is not fully operational. Alternatives, such as introducing updated voice and data systems separately, were excluded by the decision to restrict the tender to the Tetra standard.

"Plant this job application form on him"

IN THE COURTS

DAVID SHAYLER is back in England, apparently confident that the new human rights act will keep him out of jail. But he seems to have forgotten an important legal principle: on hearing the magic words "secret service", British judges will happily twist the law or turn it upside down rather than upset the spooks.

The point is amply confirmed by the recent denouement to an epic contest between Whitehall and George Blake, the former MI6 man who spied for the Russians.

The saga began a full 10 years ago, in September 1990, when Messrs Jonathan Cape published Blake's self-justifying autobiography, *No Other Choice*. Although ministers had advance notice of it, they made no attempt to prevent publication – perhaps because they'd been so badly burnt by the *Spycatcher* farce, and because none of the information in the book was remotely secret or damaging to the "national interest".

In May 1991, however, they learned that Cape had promised Blake a £150,000 advance, of which he had already been paid £60,000. The attorney-general then brought a private action against the author (though not against Cape), demanding the remaining £90,000, plus damages, since the spy had breached his "fiduciary duty" to the crown. In keeping with the speedy traditions of British jurisprudence, the case was heard in the High Court a mere five years later.

Blake, who lives in Moscow, was refused legal aid and therefore went unrepresented at the hearing. But the judge, Sir Richard Scott (of arms-to-Iraq fame), nevertheless found in his favour. Although Blake had signed the official secrets act on joining MI6 in 1944, it was "an interference with his rights of free expression" to suggest that this prevented him from writing anything at all, however harmless, even half a century afterwards.

This robust verdict made the spooks very angry indeed since they have always operated on the principle that absolutely everything related to MI5 and MI6, even down to the type of biscuits served in the staff canteen, must remain secret in perpetuity. The attorney-general duly appealed.

By the time the case reached the appeal court, in October 1997, there had been a general election; but the new regime was just as determined as its predecessor to bolster official secrecy. George Blake was again refused legal aid and had no representative in court; the government, by contrast, fielded a veritable battalion of barristers including Tony Blair's chum Lord Falconer QC, Philip Havers QC, Mary Vitoria QC plus junior counsel.

Alas! The appeal judges – Woolf, Millett and Mummery – had to concede that Sir Richard Scott's verdict was legally unimpeachable: there was no known remedy against Blake in private law. But they agreed that it would be most shocking and reprehensible if "a notorious spy" were allowed to earn money from his autobiography. And so, in a patriotic spirit, they helpfully "prompted" the crown counsel to try public law instead.

With the blessing of Lord Woolf and his two colleagues, the attorney-general hastily rewrote his statement of claim. Out went all the guff about fiduciary duty, to be replaced by an argument that in "exceptional cases" where the criminal courts were "powerless to act", the government should be allowed to claim "injunctive relief" to stop the law being brought into disrepute by KGB agents and other ne'er-do-wells.

Delighted that the attorney-general had taken the hint, Woolf and Co granted an "interim injunction" in December 1997 restraining Blake from receiving his royalties "until further order".

Even a first-year law student might notice the rather obvious flaw in this decision: how interim is interim? The money had not been frozen pending a criminal prosecution or a private lawsuit, but was in effect being seized indefinitely. This amounted to a common-law confiscation order, which the courts have no power to make.

Now it was Blake's turn to appeal to the House of Lords, aided by a solicitor and two barristers who agreed to act for him on a *pro bono* basis. Following three days of hearings in March this year, the law lords published their judgment last month – and revealed an even more remarkable willingness to bend the law than the appeal judges.

All five peers agreed that the injunction against Blake's royalties broke the important constitutional principle that there is no common-law power to confiscate property without compensation. But this left the government in the same horrible position it had been in three years earlier – unable to contemplate letting Blake get his money, but equally unable to find a single legal reason he shouldn't.

It was time for a little more "prompting". With the encouragement and permission of their lordships, the attorney-general changed tack yet again – heading back into private law and launching a cross-appeal which claimed that the government was entitled to Blake's £90,000 as "restitutionary damages".

This was even more nonsensical than the appeal court's confiscation order. Restitution (which is not the same as compensation) is normally used only where commercial or proprietary interests are involved. It has a narrow and specific legal meaning: that the defendant must return property which rightly belongs to the plaintiff. It can also be used to force someone who is unjustly enriched to reimburse the person at whose expense the enrichment took place. But since the attorney-general hadn't even attempted to argue that the government had a "proprietary right" to Blake's royalties or his book, it was obviously inapplicable in this case.

Nevertheless, four of the five law lords happily found in favour of the crown, on the grounds that Blake was a "notorious traitor" who must be punished somehow, even if this meant bending the law. It was left to the only dissenting voice, Lord Hobhouse of Woodborough, to blow the gaff on his fellow-judges' jiggery-pokery.

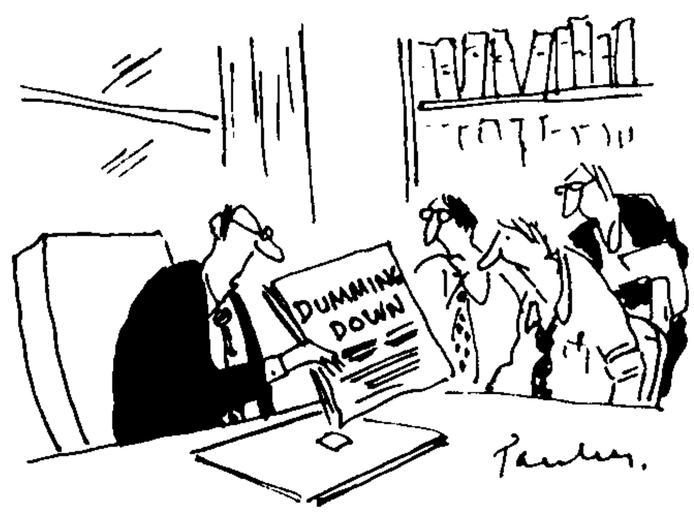
As he pointed out, the government failed to stop Blake publishing his book when it could have done. It tried to close the stable door in the high court, and lost. It then tried the court of appeal, which froze Blake's payment – but without any legal justification. So, to save the government from embarrassment, the Lords cooked up an entirely novel concept in contract law: that "restitutional damages" can be awarded merely because judges don't like the cut of the defendant's jib. If this precedent is applied to commercial law, he warned, "the consequences will be very far reaching and disruptive".

Never mind: at least the government can celebrate a famous victory. After running up legal bills close to £1m – funded by the taxpayer – it has at last obtained handsome "restitution": a cheque for the grand sum of, er, £90,000.

A PERFECT example of the "cab rank" principle in action will be demonstrated in court later this year when Richard Branson attempts to sue Tom Bower for libel.

Bower has ended up hiring Alun Jones QC to fight off Beardie after he objected to Bower's new book. Bower's previous book *Maxwell: The Final Verdict* was scathingly critical of the "rottweiler" technique with which Kevin Maxwell's QC savaged all the prosecution witnesses in the famous 1996 fraud trial and won young Kevin's acquittal. The barrister in question was, er, Alun Jones QC.

Beardie, by contrast, is still desperately seeking a rottweiler of his own. The QC he retained to take on Bower was George Carman – who has now announced his immediate retirement.



"You've spelt it incorrectly"

NOOKS AND CORNERS

THIS may be the silly season, but terrible things have been happening in the field of architecture. Hoping nobody would notice, John Prescott, secretary of state for the environment, transport and the regions, gave listed building consent at the end of August for the demolition of London's grade II* Baltic Exchange, badly damaged by an IRA bomb in 1992.

In its stead will rise the celebrated Gherkin: a tall, crudely phallic office block for Messrs Swiss Re. It is yet another masterpiece by My Lord Foster and gives encouragement to all those thrusting macho architects who want to make poor old London into an exciting city of towers.

The story stinks as it was physically possible as well as morally desirable to restore the once-magnificent Edwardian pile. English Heritage changed its mind on the issue while the City Corporation was always gung-ho for a new building. This scandalous decision has been made without a public inquiry; and even London's new mayor, the would-be radical Ken Livingstone, has remained silent on the issue of the capital's architectural heritage. Even he, it seems, dare not challenge the reverence in which Wobbling Norman is held by the establishment.

IN EYE 985 I wrote about the decent and characteristic late Georgian terraces next to St George's Circus, Southwark, which had been allowed to decay and which the overweening South Bank University wishes to replace by more of its naff post-Modern buildings. Well, I am happy to say that English Heritage and the government took my advice and responded to local pressure by listing these terraces together with the Duke of Clarence —the last original bit of the Circus — in June, while the Obelisk newly replaced in the centre has been upgraded to II*.

Meanwhile English Heritage has persuaded Southwark borough council to become "minded", as they say, to designate a conservation area around St George's Circus, despite the opposition of the council's own conservation manager.

But some people never give up. At the designation meeting at the end of July, it was found that the boundary of the proposed conservation area had been suddenly changed from that in the proposal submitted to public consultation. To oblige the South Bank University, the conservation manager decided to exclude the listed (and potentially very fine) St George's Chapel in Borough Road. And the decision on the designation was then postponed because the university threatened legal action.

This will enable the unlisted 1837 Sunday School to be demolished before a public meeting can confirm that it ought to be included in the conservation area. So much for Southwark's commitment to historic architecture and the democratic planning process.

FINALLY the depressing if predictable outcome to the consistory court hearing over the proposals to spoil the west end of Llandaff Cathedral (*Eyes passim*).

At the Llandaff diocesan court the acting chancellor Michael Evans QC found — surprise, surprise — in favour of the dean and chapter of Llandaff. The advice of the diocesan advisory committee was ignored and that useless, spineless quango CADW, in whose careless hands the fate of the historic buildings of Wales lies, could not even be bothered to give evidence.

It was left to those who actually care about a complex and fascinating building to fight for the integrity of its unusual, romantic setting. Robin Simon, editor of the *British Art Journal* — who was wrongly accused of having written the articles in the *Eye* which upset the complacent clerics of Llandaff — produced a sketch by Turner which proved that there were tombs outside the west front two centuries ago, but to no avail.

The only concession the chancellor was prepared to make was to permit an archaeological examination of the ground before the present, charmingly picturesque arrangement of steps, paths and ancient grave monuments is replaced by smart new stone and disabled ramps. And all for what? The disabled cannot use the west entrance anyway as there are steep steps inside the doors - proof that there has always been rising ground immediately outside the cathedral.

'Piloti'

EYE TV

Waking The Dead
The Last Of The Blonde Bombshells
The Nine O'Clock News
Police Dog Academy
(all BBC1)

DURING most of his three years as controller of BBC1, Peter Salmon has been known among his colleagues by the nickname "Salman". This was because he woke up each morning knowing that people were trying to finish him off.

During the Birt regime he was regarded as vulnerable because his instincts were too populist. Under the rule of Dyke, he was instantly fingered for not having enough of a feel for what people want to watch.

Now the fatwa has been enacted and Salman is no more for BBC1. A new unnecessary but remunerative bureaucratic role has been created for him and, at the time of going to press, Lorraine Heggessy, former children's and factual supremo, was being tipped to take over One, joining Jane Root (BBC2) in the corporation's first all-female ticket in television.

For several years now BBC1 has been the toughest of the corporation's services to run. This is because it's the channel whose provisions are most obviously on offer elsewhere. Make a populist show with a large audience and the critics and Kaufmans will say that ITV could have done it. Screen a public service show and audience share — the only true measure of a mainstream channel's success — will fall.

The BBC's charter would have prevented it from making *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* (How could it possibly give away six figures worth of licence fees?) And, from next year, the channel loses the football which was the only thing apart from *EastEnders* drawing mainstream male viewers to the channel. A string of recent dramas — *Border Cafe, Monarch Of The Glens, Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* — have failed to achieve either healthy audiences or approving reviews.

Salman's final autumn schedule — reaching the screens this week — shows how impossible the job has become. Waking The Dead is a new police series starring Trevor Eve and Sue Johnston. There had to be a new cop prog because ITV has been doing nicely with *A Touch Of Frost, Midsomer Murders* and repeats of *Inspector Morse* and one of BBC1's few recent successes has been *Dalziel And Pascoe*.

But the problem — as viewers rapidly realise — is that there is nothing left for the police series to do. Every possible kind of murder investigation has been done and been covered from the angles of detection, forensics, private detectives and old cops brought out of retirement to investigate their colleagues.

"They're crazy – 10pm is the time when everyone wants to watch the news"

"They're crazy – no one wants to watch news at 10 o'clock"

Waking The Dead picks up on the recent creation of police teams to reinvestigate unsolved cases using new forensic methods. This seems to be a fresh *modus operandi* – "Five years ago is the dark ages," says a pathologist, in a line of dialogue designed to advertise the series' modernity — but, in fact, pathology shows such as *Silent Witness* have already featured delayed justice.

Accordingly, *Waking The Dead* is left with retread moments. The senior detective played by Trevor Eve is in a turf battle with a plodding colleague. Sue Johnston plays a psychological profiler and you know that the character has been made female to stop us thinking too much of *Cracker*. All crime series now are copycat – there's nothing new left to do. It's hard to see what, in this case, might lure viewers back.

It's a different problem with the other big new autumn drama on One. The Last Of The Blonde Bombshells is an Alan Plater play about the reunion of a 40s swing band. The cast reads like the guest list for a thesp memorial service: Judi Dench, Ian Holm, Leslie Caron, Olympia Dukakis, Joan Sims, Billie Whitelaw, Cleo Laine. But, however much viewers may like it, there's no long-term benefit. It's a one-off with no potential for a spin-off series: at least not with the same cast. Twenty years ago, this would have been a useful audience-builder for a season of single plays but now it's alone.

Like his controversial friend Tony Blair, the new DG is finding it hard to match actions to the rhetoric and optimism which heralded his arrival. While Dyke is right that the BBC must change if it is to survive in a digital environment — becoming a leaner, more competitive organisation — the fact that the failed Salman has not been sacked but found a lucrative and more relaxing new niche seems to continue the top-heavy management practices of which Dyke has been so critical.

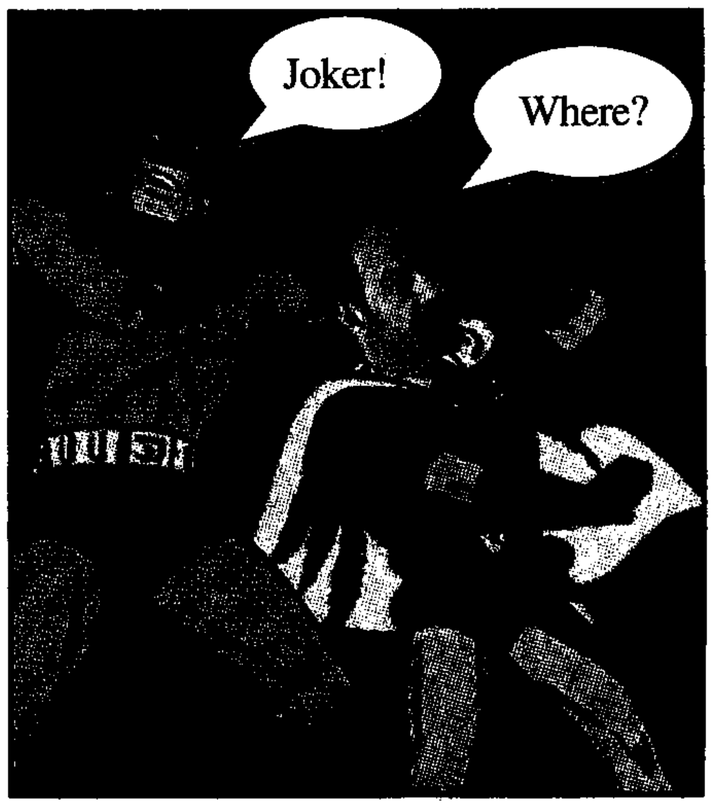
And pushing back The Nine O'Clock News may also haunt him. Some have argued that Dyke◊s creation of a *News At Ten* in exile marks him as an ITV man at heart. But perhaps the decision really shows that he hasn't been watching commercial television enough. The reason that ITN's bulletin shift has proved so hard to defend to politicians is that the hole left by Sir Trevor's relocation has been filled largely with rubbish.

Dyke and the successor to Salman will discover that Gerald Kaufman and their other critics will simply wave video cassettes and ask: "You moved the *Nine O'Clock News* for this?" Certainly routine police procedurals like *Waking The Dead* — or eighth-generation docu-soaps like Police Dog Academy — will not be seen as justifying the rescheduling. There is a dangerous illogic in expanding the availability of peak-time on a channel which has struggled to create peak-time hits.

'Square Eyes'

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore



Batman & Robin Cook

MEDIA NEWS

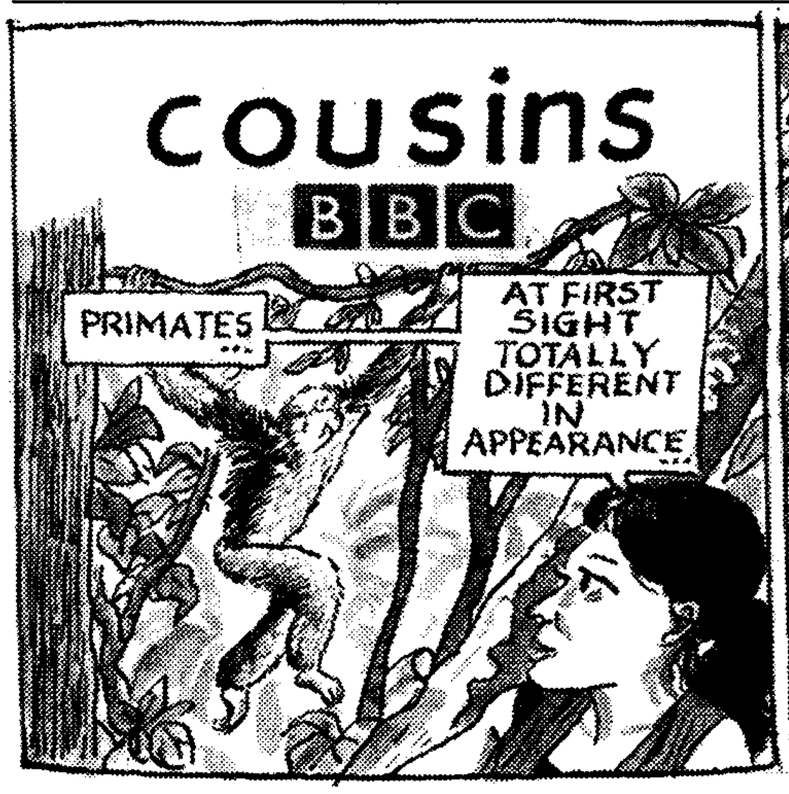
ONE early casualty of BBC director general Greg Dyke's new thinking will be the much derided BBC Forum – a Birtist invention designed to give unrepresentative jobsworths the illusion that senior managers actually give a toss about their complaints and whinges.

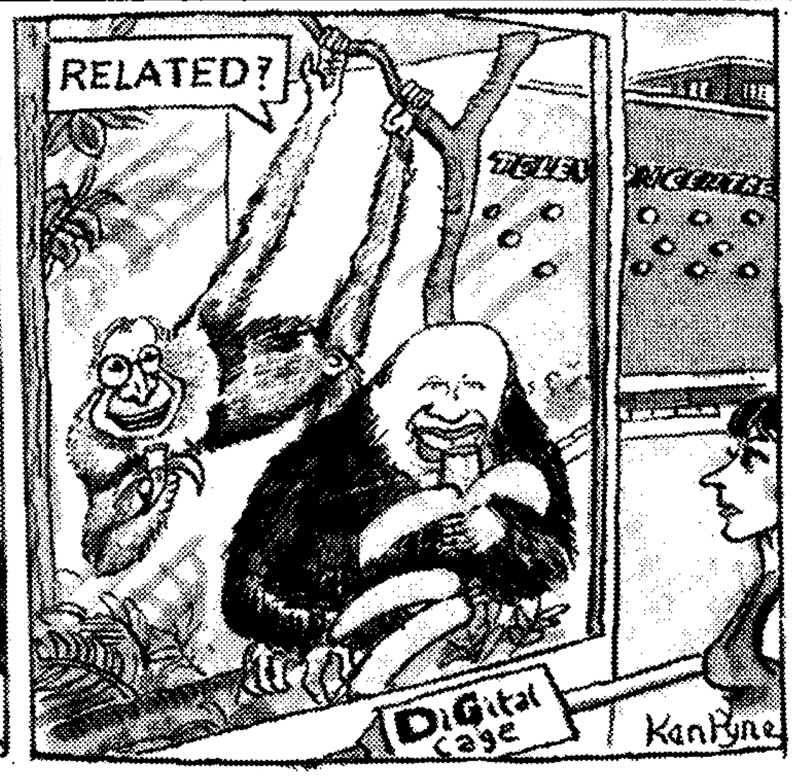
Dyke attended the latest "meeting" only to find that a third of the delegates were absent and that nobody from the "executive committee" had bothered to show their faces. After an hour he gave up himself and left. "Why are no members of the executive committee here today?" complained a delegate who had travelled all the way from Manchester. "It was a question that received no answer," record the minutes.

GOING LIVE

THE *BBC Six O'Clock News*'s live coverage from the scene of the Russian submarine disaster on 20 August, broadcast from a specially (and expensively) hired aircraft, was spectacularly pointless.

Nothing at all could be seen. And as the report pointed out, because the Russians had declared a total air exclusion zone around the site, the camera crew couldn't even get near to the nothing that couldn't be seen anyway.





AT White City *Panorama* hacks busy celebrating BBC controller Peter Salmon's demise (he cut their series run by eight episodes after a string of insufficiently large ratings) have confirmed a disturbing rumour.

One of the favourites for the editor's chair, vacant now that Peter Horrocks has been kicked upstairs, is currently wooing the programme's board with a proposal for a major investigation into... the pester-power of Playstation 2.

Timed for a pre-Christmas transmission, this current affairs-free "bums-on-seats" banker will doubtless ensure she's a dead cert for the top job. Dumbing down, anyone?

RUPERT Murdoch's Fox television was ordered to pay US$425,000 damages to one of its own investigative reporters who had threatened to blow the whistle on "the broadcast of a false, distorted or slanted news report" to US broadcasting regulators (see last *Eye*).

Last week a jury in Tampa awarded the damages to reporter Jane Akre after Fox sacked her for refusing to water down allegations about the use of *Monsanto's* controversial bovine growth hormone in Florida cattle.

At first it was thought the bird was a young tawny owl, but it was confirmed as a little owl by the force's wildlife liaison officer, Sgt Eddie Bell, who has taken the bird under his wing.

Yorkshire Post

AD NAUSEAM

YOU will have gathered by the fact that national lottery advertising is absolutely everywhere all of the time that this is a rather sizeable advertising account. So let's take a moment to marvel at what around £30m a year gets you in adland.

Firstly "It could be you", a Saatchi classic where a big hand appeared from the sky and proceeded to give people all over the country the finger – a rather apt metaphor for your prospects come the draw. And more recently, WCRS dipped into a thesaurus and changed it to "Maybe, just maybe".

But none of this matters now that our Lord Protector R. Branson has come to deliver us. Pending a legal challenge from a decidedly miffed Camelot, his People's Lottery will take the reins next year, and part of its winning bid argues that cunning advertising will be crucial to continued success, promising an increased spend of £40m. Agencies countrywide began to gee-up their finest minds for the task, confident they could engage the spirit of the nation – only to find that there will be no competitive pitch for this prized account: it's already been given to J. Walter Thompson, jewel in Martin Sorrell's WPP diaspora and famous for being really quite good 20 years ago, when the Oxo family were cutting edge stuff.

JWT has been making a bit of a habit of this lately. All of its recent high-profile "wins" – Smirnoff, Land Rover and now this – have come not from their brilliant ideas but from careful cultivation of Martin's mates or global realignment.

And the whiter-than-white People's Lottery is no different. As they toasted last week's triumph, fielding the questions was Branson's chief executive Simon Burridge, who bears an uncanny resemblance to the Simon Burridge who left JWT last year after decades of good service. Moreover, internal rumblings at JWT suggest that the jobs for the boys won't end there. Why did JWT's go-getting young chief exec Stephen Carter turn down a better paid and more high-profile role in charge of ITV last week? Why, in the same week, did his wife leave a top marketing job at the BBC, with no new job to go to? It appears that in the People's Lottery, some people are going to be better off than others.

LUNATIC FRINGE

THE once great arts section of the *Scotsman*, which sponsors the major Edinburgh festival fringe venue, the Assembly Rooms, was high on the agenda at the Fringe agm last month.

Speakers questioned the credentials of many of the reviewers, arguing that while a few are experienced stalwarts, a number are completely new names who have tried to cast themselves in the Dorothy Parker mould – but lack the wit, skill or experience.

The situation was not been helped by the arrival, just two weeks before the start of the festival, of the paper's new arts editor Rhona Johnston, fresh from that bastion of Scottish arts, the tabloid *Daily Record*. Johnston's main contribution so far has been to reduce fringe and festival coverage in the Edinburgh broadsheet by 50 percent.

Andrew Neill even managed to bore readers of his recent diary column for the *Spectator* with the news that editor Hardy had telephoned him in his French bolt-hole (a mile or so east of Grasse, not far from San Trop) to tell him she had "spent the weekend listening to the relentless moans of the luvvies who run the Edinburgh Festival Fringe".

Neill, ever the diplomat, reassured her that "a paper whose sales are up by over 30 percent because it is no longer the mouthpiece of the Edinburgh blethering classes should not be cowed by a few folk who do nothing for us".

Oddly he forgot to mention that the main reason sales are up is that the *Scotsman* slashed its cover price to 20p in May, where it has remained ever since; or that the main concern of the "luvvies" was the preponderance of glowing reviews in the *Scotsman* for performances at... the Assembly Rooms.

DUMB BRITAIN

BRAIN-TEASERS from *The Weakest Link*, the aptly-named BBC2 quiz show presented with obvious reluctance by Anne Robinson...

Q: Which Cluedo character has a military rank?

A: Colonel Sanders.

Q: In which county is the seaside resort of Bournemouth?

A: Blackpool.

And from ITV's *Family Fortunes* come the following:

Q: Name something easy to do forwards but difficult to do backwards.

A: Eating.

Q: Give a reason for standing up quickly.

A: Going to church.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

AFTER recent revelations here about the queenly manner of Ms Jessye Norman's dealings with the BBC, reports of comparably bad behaviour in the music world pour in concerning the tempestuous British maestro Sir John Eliot Gardiner, who is devoting the entire year to a mission to convert the world to J.S Bach.

In much the way that penitents once vowed to crawl through every holy door in Christendom on hands and knees or scour the globe to kiss the scattered remnants of some minor saint, so Sir John Eliot has vowed to perform every one of Bach's 198 church cantatas on the exact liturgical days for which they were written, in a 12-month "pilgrimage" (so called) of churches throughout Europe and America.

But at the half-way mark things aren't going so well. It's turning out to be too vast an undertaking, fraught with sackings, rows and not such brilliant concerts in which any element of humility in this "pilgrimage" has vanished.

A few weeks ago the Bach roadshow arrived at the St Magnus Festival on Orkney: an event anyone in the music business knows is fairly basic: not exactly Edinburgh or Salzburg. But Sir John arrived and threw a tantrum when he found no limousine to meet him. Word was passed to Peter Maxwell Davies, Orkney's resident musical genius who oversees the festival from his crofter's cottage on a windswept cliff. "What shall we do?" asked anxious intermediaries. "Send him a hearse," said Davies.

Some days later Gardiner hit another island community, Iona, where his choir and orchestra performed on the exact anniversary of Bach's death, 200 years ago. Meanwhile, in his absence Gardiner's London headquarters organised a Deathday party for all the members of the great man's staff who have been shown the door during the last few years – including his current general manager who happens to be under notice. It was said to be a crowded event.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

EARLIER this year the *Eye* mentioned Mohamed Fayed's exciting plan to relocate his web version of Harrods to Ireland, mooted during a two-part interview in Trinity Mirror's Dublin organ the *Sunday Business Post* which was headed "The Fabulous Mr Fayed".

Little has been heard of Mo.com since the interview, which tragically sealed the fate of Al-Fugger's smooth-talking spokesman Laurie Mayer. For Fayed was furious with the way in which he'd been portrayed, and after Mayer had been forced to pen a 730-word diatribe to the paper which failed to get the necessary retraction, the hysterical haberdasher turned to Max Clifford instead.

In his letter the wretched Mayer complained that "Jennifer O'Connell's interview was a travesty... Mr Al Fayed's performance on the Ali G show did not result in 'a rash of tabloid editorials which deemed his performance suitably demeaning'. Quite the contrary...

"Mohamed feels both incensed and insulted by Ms O'Connell's article. He is bitterly disappointed as he had been led to expect much fairer treatment, having been told repeatedly how much more sympathetic the Irish are towards him...

"You may be interested to learn that, as a direct result, he has decided to move the headquarters of the Harrods online operation away from Dublin."

Oh really? As the *Eye* pointed out, the phoney pharaoh's desire to move part of his business to Ireland may have had less to do with his professed "love" of the country than with the tax concessions that were available. Careful reading of the Mayer letter indicated that the site was still heading abroad, though not to Dublin.

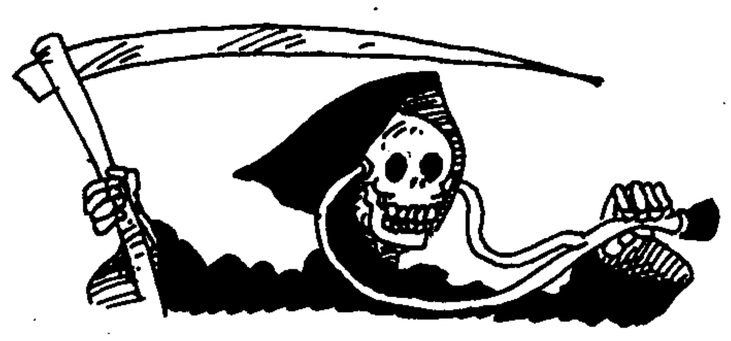
Alas, it has still not found a home. And harrods.com (which boasts a fine line in "women's intimate apparel") is currently only able to deliver to North America through an agency arrangement, and is curiously unable to accept the (British-regulated) Harrods charge card as payment: only US-registered credit or debit cards will do.

There is, of course, no suggestion that Fayed's disastrous interview prompted the Inland Revenue to wonder why a store that trades on its alleged "Britishness" should suddenly need to take some of its operations offshore. Perhaps Chairman Mo simply realised that parts of the Caribbean – or even Libya – would provide a more, er, hospitable environment.

FAG ENDS

CREDITORS of a company set up by youthful society entrepreneur Justin Etzin, whose CV includes organising parties attended by Prince William and Euan Blair, will be delighted to learn that the boy wonder has come up with a lucrative scheme to pay them back.

When Etzin resigned as a director of Eventtime he left debts of £156,948, owed to 52 parties (see *Eye* 997). Having gained maturity from this experience he has now quit London's underage party scene for the quieter streets of Luxembourg, where he is raising the cash to assuage his plagued conscience by selling cheap cigarettes to the UK via the internet site www.halfpricecigarettes.com



DOING THE ROUNDS

What, no CHCs?

MACHO health secretary Alan Milburn had a tough choice in deciding who to abolish in his national plan for the NHS. Would he take on the might of the medical profession and finally put the self-serving, incompetent General Medical Council out of its misery? Or would he piss all over lowly community health councils, the single source of independent, patient-led, local scrutiny of the NHS?

Not wishing to duck a difficult decision, Milburn never once discussed the option of abolishing CHCs with their national association prior to burying the decision in the back end of his plan. Indeed ACHEW (the Association of Community Health Councils in England and Wales) was briefed by the department of health to expect "reforms and enhancements". Of the 600 members now facing redundancy, many only found out by logging on to the DoH website.

Milburn has since been keen to lay into his soft target, describing CHCs as "an outdated model that no one believes in any more" and "dinosaurs without relevance to the modern NHS". So why did a poll of nearly 2,000 readers of the *Health Service Journal* (generally people who know more about the NHS than Milburn could ever hope to) find 88 percent in favour of keeping them? Probably because they don't trust the government to come up with anything better.

Milburn's suggested replacement is another ridiculous acronym — PALS (patient advocacy liaison service) in every hospital; and a duty for local government to scrutinise local NHS changes. So much for independence.

CHCs were established by statute in 1974 as independent scrutineers and inspectors, in addition to enabling patient advocacy. Despite pitiful funding (the average CHC in England has a disposable budget of £20,000 a year), they have forced through many local improvements and caused successive governments embarrassment with their national surveys of conditions, waiting times and trolley-stops in hospitals.

Their major problem is a lack of teeth: South Birmingham CHC's opposition to the planned 200 acute bed reductions that will occur if Queen Elizabeth and Selly Oak hospitals are replaced was steamrollered by public health minister Yvette Cooper. Leicester CHC's opposition to closure of the acclaimed breast and cardiac services at Glenfield hospital looks set to meet the same fate. And North and Mid Bedfordshire CHC's request for an inquiry into cardiac pacemaker services at Bedford hospital was declined by the government's "independent" Commission for Health Improvement (CHI).

Instead of abolishing the England's 182 CHCs, Milburn should tap into their local knowledge to improve accountability in the NHS. Earlier this year, ACHEW set up an independent commission chaired by Will Hutton which found the NHS to be "woefully unaccountable". One suggested solution — to make the NHS a semi-independent public corporation with constitutional independence from politicians — may have been too much for the meddling, ambitious Milburn. Closing CHCs will make his life easier but the NHS even less accountable.

● MEANWHILE the General Medical Council (GMC) has responded to a report from the Policy Studies Institute which found it lacks transparency and consistency (surprise, surprise) by refusing to declare which of its members are freemasons.

Milburn is unlikely to force the GMC's hand. Just a month after his plan was published, he's already caved into the British Medical Association and cut the length of time new consultants must work exclusively for the NHS from seven years to five. By Christmas the ban is likely to have gone completely. There are some organisations you just don't mess with.

M.D.

100 Years Ago

"How do you know I've got a broken leg when you can't even speak English?"

Cartoon by Barry Fantoni 1969

SIGNAL FAILURES

APPORTIONING blame has been an overriding feature of rail safety culture since privatisation; yet somehow there has been no chastisement of the biggest culprits of all: the politicians and public servants who ignored safety warnings and privatised British Rail by splitting it into 120 commercial parts.

To get around MPs' safety concerns, they promised that Railtrack would stay in the public sector. When they then sold it (without parliamentary sanction) Railtrack's role as safety regulator was compromised by its commercial duties.

The process should have been stopped in its tracks by the health and safety executive (HSE), which has been responsible for Her Majesty's railway inspectorate (HMRI) since the early 1990s. But the HSE kept quiet, even though fragmentation and privatisation would wreck the safety culture and make two safety commitments impossible: replacement of slam-door trains by 1998 and provision of automatic train protection (ATP) by the late 1990s.

The HSE too has been let off the hook to the dismay of many – not least Mr Derek Snook, whose wife was killed in the Watford crash in August 1996. Mr Snook believes HMRI is guilty of "lethal inertia" and failed to stand up to uncooperative rail companies. Indeed, the crash inquiry's transcript shows how HMRI failed to inspect new signalling at Watford although it knew a safety margin at one signal was dangerously shorter than standard. It had had nearly three years to inspect the signalling when the crash happened — in which time the crucial signal was passed at red four times. Neither HMRI nor Railtrack was punished. Instead there was an unsuccessful attempt to convict the train driver of manslaughter.

The Southall crash report at least acknowledged the effect of fragmentation and privatisation, but those who created the system and those who were employed to make it work went unpunished. The first part of the Ladbroke Grove crash inquiry did hit uncomfortably close to home for HSE director general Jenny Bacon, who tried to distance her organisation from its HMRI arm. She admitted "a gradual reduction of trust in the industry after privatisation" – a situation the HSE should have foreseen and tried to prevent.

The HSE claimed at the inquiry to be short of rail inspectors. But much of the problem lies in inefficient use of staff, who are too busy with trivia to attend to the big issues. On 15 June, for instance, the HSE issued copious new safety guidance for operators of miniature railways – essentially kiddies' rides using model locomotives. On 16 June a Thames Trains service passed a signal at danger outside Paddington station, stopping 60 yards short of collision with a Heathrow Express. The incident suggested some signal-location factors remained unaddressed after Ladbroke Grove.

'Dr B. Ching'

DOWN ON THE FARM

REPRESENTATIVES of the meat and livestock industries sat agog at a recent meeting of the Meat Industry Forum in York when officials of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) announced the latest bombshell from Brussels.

As from 1 January, they were told, another new BSE-related EU rule means it will no longer be legal to slaughter cattle using techniques "presenting a risk of causing brain material to contaminate other tissues".

News that this edict was on the way was first revealed here in June (*Eye* 1003). But the full implications for the meat men only came to light in York.

Geoff Lawson, formerly of the MAFFia, now a senior luminary of Sir John Krebs' Food Standards Agency, explained how from 1 January the practice known as "pithing" would be outlawed. When a beef animal is killed in the slaughterhouse, it is first stunned by a heavy metal bolt being driven into its forehead. By a natural response of its nervous system, the animal then begins twitching and throwing itself about, posing immense risk to any slaughterman within reach. To be hit by half a ton of twitching bovine is no joke.

To minimise this risk, as soon as the animal is stunned a flexible pithing rod is pushed through the hole left by the bolt into the animal's brain and spinal column. This is to neutralise the nervous system and prevent further movement. For the sake of anyone working nearby, this is a vital safety measure. Yet it is this which Sir John Krebs and the FSA propose to outlaw.

No one has produced evidence to suggest "pithing" might increase any risk of BSE-infected tissue being passed on to the consumer. Under existing regulations, the animal's head must be removed and incinerated, the entire spinal column likewise, so the new rule is nothing more than a ritual: the only way British officials could devise to demonstrate compliance with the EU regulation, short of insisting that all animals should be put to death in gassing pens, a method so cumbersome and expensive it would bring the entire meat industry to a halt.

Typically the officials came up with their new diktat without a thought for its horrendous practical implications. The only possible consequence of removing this safety measure is that the lives of hundreds of men in the meat industry will be put at risk. And if this sounds like exaggeration, just recall what happened when a similar mindless diktat ruled that all long-haired cattle should have their bellies shaved before slaughter. In the first year, according to the Scottish Health and Safety Executive, this caused more than 200 serious injuries to employees who had to crawl under animals' bellies with a pair of clippers.

The response of the assembled meat men in York, led by John Chadwick of the Small Abattoirs Association, was to protest that the proposal was totally unworkable. For the safety of their employees, it would have to be ignored. But the FSA officials were adamant. No matter that Sir John Krebs had announced his agency's policies would at all times be guided by the best available scientific evidence, and that in this case there was not a shred of evidence to justify the policy. What was important, apparently, was that Brussels had spoken.

'Even Newer Muckspreader'

Number crunching

20 PERCENT: proportion of the countryside which will be left with any protection at all should the ban on advertising in rural areas be lifted by the DETR

20 THOUSAND SQUARE MILES: area which will then be available for billboards, hoardings and other forms of advertisement

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

BOOZE, HISS...

IN ANOTHER boost for open government, Labour's local government supremo Howard Knight has issued a circular stating that "councillors are not, and should not try to be, private detectives". Allegations concerning a Labour councillor, the circular says, should be passed to the whips and not repeated to anyone else — especially the press.

As readers of Rotten Boroughs know, the Labour party has a tremendous record of investigating itself and finding nothing amiss. Take, for example, the case of the theft of hundreds of pounds worth of booze from the drinks cabinet of former Durham council leader Bill Kellett by four fellow councillors in 1996.

This was hushed up by the local party until *Eye* 990 told how the council's present leader, Maurice Crathorne MBE, with councillors John Bowman, Mildred Brown and Derrick Payne, had helped themselves to drink after forcing a lock. The Labour party launched an "investigation" that concluded that there had been no wrongdoing — without even interviewing Kellett.

The police did interview Kellett, who told them the facts but declined to make a formal complaint. Meanwhile Crathorne and Co hired Newcastle solicitors Thompsons to issue letters threatening dire consequences against anyone spreading "malicious allegations". Thompsons were paid £587.50 from Labour party funds, one of the cheque's signatories being, er, Cllr John Bowman.

Of the four involved in the booze theft, by the way, only Crathorne and Bowman survive on the council. Payne stood down after being convicted of a sexual assault against a female council employee, while Brown remains suspended while under investigation (by the Labour party) over allegations of racial abuse (*Eyes passim*).

● THE Donnygate saga (*Eyes passim*) moved up a gear with the appearance in court last month of 12 people variously charged with corruptly influencing planning applications in return for financial gain, seeking to influence, receiving payments, aiding and abetting corruption, and false accounting. The 12 include former Doncaster planning chair Peter Birks, who is alleged to have received a farm as a gift; former deputy council leader Ray Stockhill, alleged to have received payments; and current Tory leader John Dainty, OBE. All the cases were adjourned until 6 November.

JEAN TRANSPLANT

FRAUD in the health service is so widespread a regional NHS seminar was convened last month in Barnsley to examine the problem. But something approaching astonishment greeted the appearance of Jean Elwick, former chair of Doncaster social services, as the £5,000 pa representative for Doncaster healthcare trust.

Elwick, chair of Donny's first-ever standards committee, was booted out of her Armthorpe seat in 1998 by an ungrateful electorate. She bounced back as an approved candidate under Labour's strict new squeaky-clean guidelines, but before she could find a new seat she was arrested last year on seven specimen charges of fiddling her expenses. She now awaits her day in court. As regional Labour party officer Tony Slatcher says: "Some of these Doncaster councillors have more neck than giraffes."

● NEWCASTLE is not the only Labour council to embrace "social cleansing" as a solution to the problem of run-down estates (*Eye* 1008). In Lambeth a £440m "regeneration" scheme may deprive at least 300 families of their homes. Project Vauxhall involves bulldozing 900 council houses on the Ethelred Estate, Kennington, and replacing them with 2,500 luxury apartments.

Just 600 "affordable" properties would be built. Residents are now being balloted on the project and most are unimpressed. They would be decanted from the estate during the 14-year scheme, but no one has yet explained where to or for how long.

Some also suspect the council secretly hopes that more than a few of the estate's oldies will die before the project is completed, thereby solving the tricky mathematical problem of making 900 go in to 600.

CARRY ON COUNCILLOR

BROMLEY council's deputy mayor Bill Hawthorne is something of a champion of law and order and a vocal supporter of the police. Only last month the Lib Dem councillor for St Paul's Cray joined a dawn police raid on the homes of suspected local vandals, winning approving coverage from the local press for his stand against the louts. Alas the ugly side of modern Britain made an appearance in Cllr Hawthorne's own suburban street over the bank holiday weekend when two neighbours became involved in an angry scuffle after one complained about noise from a barbecue in the next door garden. The resident holding the barbecue, bricklayer Joe Bocio, spent two nights in hospital with a cracked skull after being hit by a baseball bat. When he came round he was arrested by police. He has in turn laid a complaint against his alleged assailant... Cllr Bill Hawthorne.

High Principals

WHEN the US government sued Warnborough College near Oxford in 1995 for leading overseas students to believe it was part of Oxford University, it looked like the end for the college.

Warnborough was described in the prospectus as "the leading gateway into Oxford for international students, and the only Oxford College that admits US students directly out of high school". Students who had paid up to £13,000 in fees were outraged when they discovered the college was actually situated on Boar's Hill, several miles from Oxford city centre, and was not in any way connected to the university.

The campus was subsequently repossessed by a creditor and the founder and president of the college, Dr Brendan Tempest-Mogg, returned to his native Australia.

Warnborough has since been miraculously reborn on the internet, now calling itself a university. This "virtual" university gives a contact address in London, but a history of its illustrious Oxford past still appears on the website. Needless to say no mention is made of the fact that the Boar's Hill era came to rather a messy end. It is merely noted that: "In 1996, Warnborough took the initiative to further the academic interests of students worldwide by providing them with traditional learning in different environments." Prospective students should take heed, and may also be interested to know that Warnborough's much-vaunted International MBA is not accredited by the recognised body, the Association for MBAs.

ANOTHER academic institution that has taken advantage of the internet to claim links with Oxford which do not exist is St George University International (SGUI), a virtual university with an address in Japan.

The principal of SGUI is Dr Rolf G. Pussel, whose distinguished academic CV consists of an unaccredited PhD in homeopathy from the American Coastline University (another virtual body).

In December 1998 Dr Pussel contacted the Oxford College of Further Education (OCFE) asking if it would be willing to provide English language tuition to two Japanese students who were unhappy with the teaching they were receiving at a local private language school. It was agreed they would be taken on and their fees paid by SGUI.

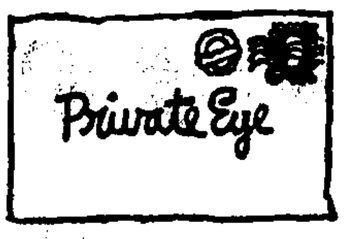
In January 1999 Dr Pussel visited the OCFE and set up an agency agreement. The following month Dr Pussel faxed over a draft publicity leaflet, which somehow failed to make it clear that degrees would be awarded by SGUI and not by OCFE. Amendments were agreed over the telephone, but no final draft was ever presented to OCFE.

In December 1999 Oxford Trading Standards contacted OCFE seeking information on the college's links with SGUI. Trading standards alleged that SGUI was distributing leaflets in Japan that gave the impression students could gain a degree from an Oxford college. The text on the SGUI website also contained potentially misleading information. Following negotiations all reference to OCFE has now been removed from the site, but eight months later SGUI is still under investigation by trading standards, showing just how difficult it is to regulate internet universities which sell their services by association with British colleges.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

Letters



Kursk of Gnome?

Sir,

I refer to the cartoon of and references to the Kursk disaster in Eye 1009, pages 5 and 17.

I was appalled that this tragedy should be so used. You have erred in this vein increasingly recently. My enthusiasm is waning and my subscription is due for renewal in October.

Hoping for better things.
DAVE GODDARD,
Broadstone, Dorset.

Law is an ass

Sir,

I would particularly like to thank you for your campaign against the European human rights act, particularly with such scathing attacks as your "EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO SUE EVERYONE ELSE" skit of Eye 1008.

The recent act, due to come into force in October and not ratified by many of the more anecdotally liberal EU states, has to be one of the most insidious pieces of anti-justice legislation I have ever encountered. Even though it is not yet on the statute books, judges and magistrates who have been approached to issue surveillance orders in the past few months have said that while currently legal, they would be refused under the future legislation and hence denied them.

While most police are traditionally viewed as "right wing", I have always remained politically neutral, sticking to the Nixonesque view that "those who seek political office should be excluded from holding power by virtue of their personal ambitions".

KNACKERED KNACKER OF THE MET,
Via e-mail.

Tea and Semtex

Sir,

Why shouldn't the News of the World or ASDA have contacts with members of the National Democrats (Eye 1009)? At least the National Democrats were not responsible for nearly 30 years of murder, mayhem and terrorism in the UK. Perhaps if they were Messrs Anderson and Potter, they could set their sights higher than the local ASDA. Tea and handshakes at Number Ten, followed by £80,000 a year jobs as education ministers, perhaps?

The different treatment handed out by the media to Irish nationalists and British nationalists does not go unnoticed — witness Ken Livingstone's comments after the David Copeland bombing that it was "unacceptable" to bomb innocent people in London. I expect such hypocrisy from loonies (sic) like Red Ken, but not from the Eye.

Yours,
ANTHONY DAVID JONES,
Lancashire.

Hard (Swiss) cheese

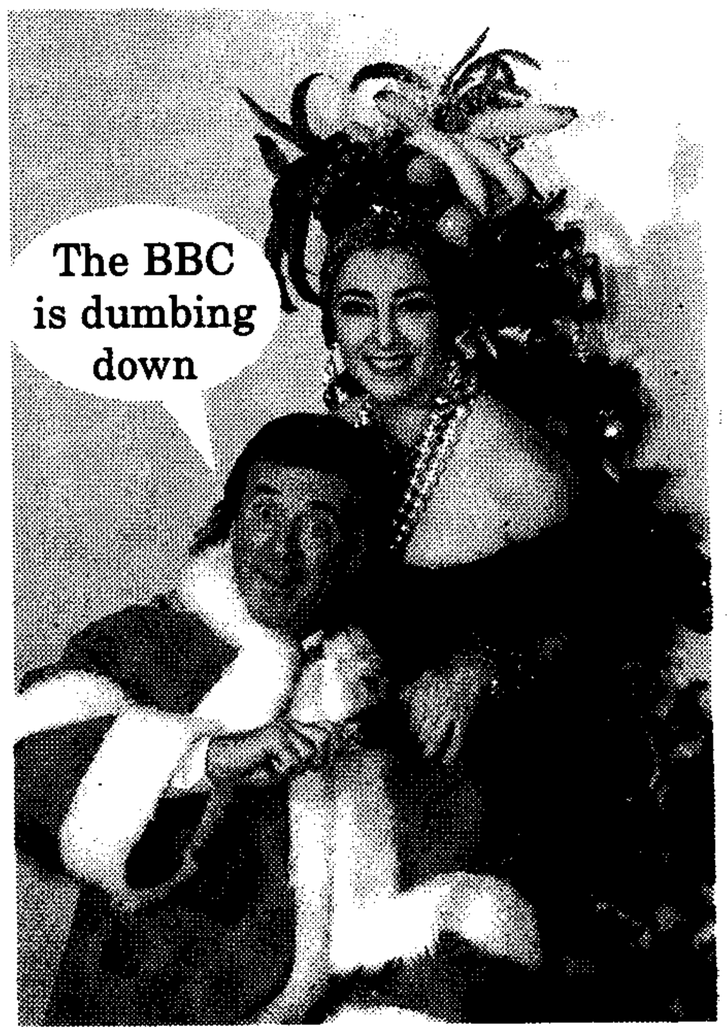
Sir,

In Eye 1009, Piloti complains that "The Swiss Light" atop the Tate Modern chimney does not appear in recent books or postcards, presumably implying that it was furtively sneaked up there when no-one was looking.

On the wall in front of me, there is a "computer generated image by Hayes Davidson", pictured on the front cover of my Friends of the Tate membership renewal request. I received this last January, and I'm happy to tell Piloti that Herzog & de Meuron's crowning glory is clearly portrayed. Still, it's modern and they're foreign (worse, they're Swiss!), so how could Piloti resist jumping in with both feet?

TERRY KEALY,
Bovingdon, Herts

WOGAN SPEAKS OUT



Organ grinder

Sir,

As the proud possessor of an almost microscopic penis, I bitterly resent the suggestion by Ruth Shipstone (Letters, 1009) that I am more likely to be a racist than men with larger organs. To claim that there is a causal link between tiny tools and racial bigotry is as absurd as claiming that some women of a pseudo-liberal persuasion will make arbitrary and sexist remarks about male body types and get away with it just because they are female.

Yours, quite flaccid with shame at not measuring up to the expectations of female social workers,
MIKE TURATE,
Via e-mail.

The Buckby stops here

Sir,

I am certainly learning the hard way that, as Director of Britain in Europe, I have to take a good deal of ribaldry from sections of the press – even if it is based on exaggerations and untruths. I guess that's just life. But I thought the allegation, conjured up from thin air (Eye 1009) that I am involved in financial dodgy dealings went a step too far. I am not.

Yours,
SIMON BUCKBY,
Campaign Director, Britain in Europe.

Sir,

Your allegations of skullduggery in the appointment of Britain in Europe (BiE) director Simon Buckby are so factually incorrect as to make your whole story spurious.

I was the political consultant asked by the fledgling BiE board to oversee the recruitment process which saw Buckby appointed as BiE campaign director.

Certainly I sought views from experienced campaigners on whom we might encourage to apply. Certainly I asked Peter Mandelson, a friend and former colleague and a leading voice in the pro-European camp. But I also asked at least two senior Tories, Liberal Democrats, political campaign old hands and journalists. Buckby was not even on Mandelson's recommended list. In fact, Peter's most active recommendation was an extremely experienced and able campaigner but who was ultimately unable to commit to the job full-time and so did not make the shortlist. So the suggestions that "Buckby was installed... at the insistence of his mentor Peter Mandelson" is total balls.

Using a points system based on relevant experience, our recruitment agency and I put together a strong panel of experienced campaigners from across the political and media landscape. On the basis of his broad experience — politics, the media, advertising and campaigning — Buckby emerged as the unanimous choice, not of Liddle and Mandelson as you suggest, but of a panel consisting of Lord Howe, Lord Marshall, Lord Hollick, KPMG's Niel Sherlock (Lib-Dem) and Giles Radice MP representing European Movement.

Yours,
COLIN BYRNE,
Chief Executive, Shandwick International Public Affairs.

OH, YEAH? "Our nation is chosen by God and commissioned by history to be a model to the world of justice and inclusion and diversity without division," [Mr Bush] said.

— Daily Telegraph

Spirited response

Sir,

Re: Degree of error (Letters, 1008).

Appalled as O.E. Maly may have been, the strength of spirits has been measured as a percentage for some years... percentage alcohol by volume. But then, given the longevity of the Queen Mother (gawd bless 'er) I suppose a lapse into a measurement introduced by Bartholomew Sykes in 1816 is appropriate.

Yours ever more pedantically,
GAVIN INGLIS,
Via e-mail.

Signals failure

Sir,

Tin arms semaphore signals may have been bloody great (Seeing the Light, Eye 1009), but also bloody difficult to see in the dark or low sun, and did not always work properly (Longforgan in 1979, for example). Swung to two positions actually, and even then drivers occasionally misread the position and ran their train into the back of the train in front.

Yours enlightenedly,
CHRISTOPHER REEVES,
Via e-mail.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

I-SPY

Keynsham, Somerset

Submitted by Michael Hutchings. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Badgering the badger

Sir,

Re: Eye 1008, Down on the Farm.

I was a member of the MAFF badgers panel back in the 1980s and regularly asked why more research into the other carriers of TB was not carried out. I also asked why TB died out in Kent and Surrey, with some of the highest densities of badger populations. The widespread occurrence of TB in short-tailed voles, which often occur in tens of thousands in pasture, has been noted for over 50 years, but little or no research into whether or not they infect cattle and/or badgers. Similarly, TB has been found in brown rats, which are a species not unknown to have regular contact with cattle, being often super-abundant in farm buildings, but again little research has been undertaken. Twenty years ago, it appeared that the badger was being used as a scapegoat for MAFF's inability to carry out research into the true reasons for the spread of TB (probably the fact that cattle are moved around the countryside). Nothing I have seen in recent years leads me to believe otherwise.

Yours sincerely,
JOHN A BURTON,

Suffolk.

Lookalike

George

Brenda

Sir,

A shot of Brenda enjoying herself on duty in Yorkshire the other day irresistibly calls to mind another royal profile. It's George III by James Gillray in 1795.

Are they in some way related?

Yours historically,
JOHN WARDROPER,

London N1.

Stephenson rocket

Sir,

Re: D. Stephenson — Chief Executive East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

As joint leaders of the East Riding of Yorks council we feel that we should reply to your article on the chief executive and to make it clear that as councillors we make the policy and expect Mr Stephenson to implement it.

In your latest article you refer to the sale of the Hall in Lairgate, Beverley, to Philip Bramley. First of all can we make it clear that it is not the function of this council to hold land or buildings that it does not need. The fact that the Hall was former council offices and a Grade 1 listed building does not alter that position — the Hall was surplus to our accommodation needs.

We are not a rich council and the sale of the Hall made economic sense. Not just because of the £500,000 capital receipt but also because of the running and maintenance cost of the building that we will save each year.

You are also mistaken when you infer that as a result of selling the Hall, we are now short of office space and therefore have to spend £1m on a new extension. Yes, we are building a new extension to replace an existing wooden extension to Council Hall that is an old rotting building and an eyesore — it is not suitable accommodation for our staff and has extremely high maintenance costs.

Yours faithfully,
JOINT LEADERS,

East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

Old chestnut

Sir,

Perhaps you need a department to check the originality of your cartoons. Hom Sap's little joke ("I got rid of my husband", "On what grounds?", "Under the patio") is about 400 years old:

Gravedigger: 'Faith, e'en with losing his wits.
Hamlet: Upon what ground?
Gravedigger: Why, here in Denmark.

Yours,
MARTIN PORTER,

Norwich.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Sometimes in football you have to score goals."
THIERRY HENRY, Sky Sports
(Roger Main)

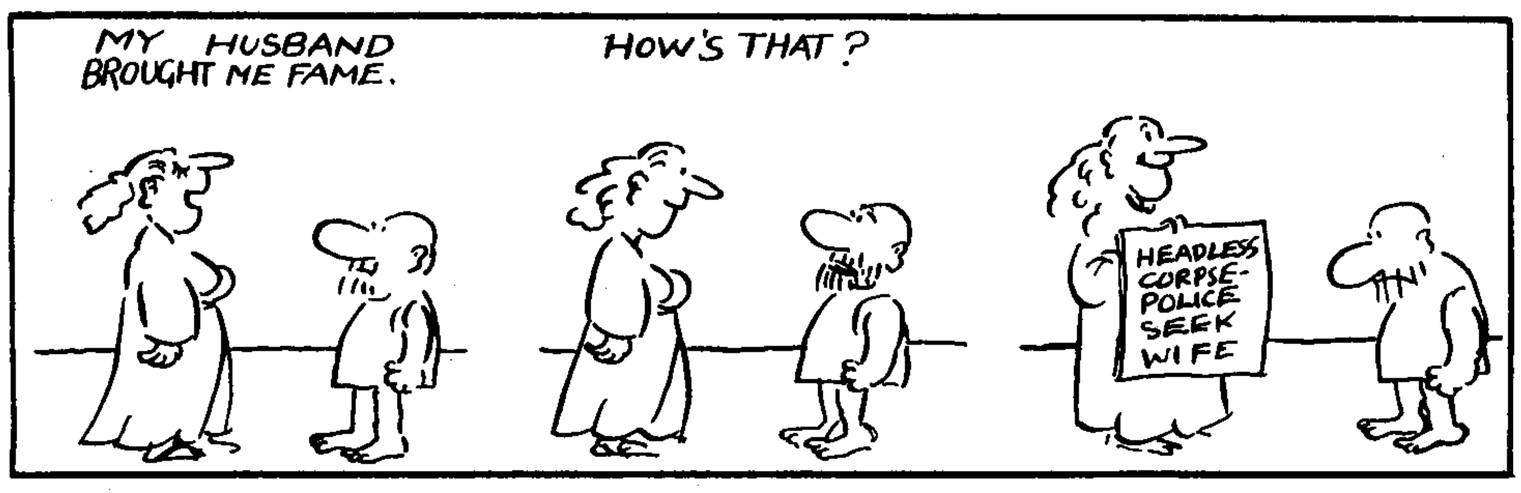
"Quinn, for the umpteenth time, got his first goal of the current campaign."
BRIAN MOORE, BBC Match of the Day
(Ian Walton)

"Michael Vaughan has a long history in the game ahead of him."
MARK NICHOLAS, Channel 4
(Anna Lomax)

"The Germans only have one player under twenty-two and he's twenty-three."
KEVIN KEEGAN, BBC News
(Steve Speight)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN



Pseuds Corner

[Nick] Bateman is in a different league to these petty fibbers. His deviousness has a Shakespearean breadth to it. You can imagine him as Edmund in *King Lear*, standing on the lawn at midnight and shaking his fist at the moon. "Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law my services are bound."

EMMA BROCKES
Guardian

I don't want to sound like a snob, but it takes a lot of time and energy to understand popular culture — you can't just come in for the good bits any more than you can stand outside a concert hall until you hear the aria you know from your Classic FM compilation.

CHARLOTTE RAVEN
Guardian

Sir,

My former schoolfellow Hugh Lawson-Tancred has composed a stylish and erudite Latin ode for the Queen Mother's birthday, the first stanza splendidly honouring the Bowes-Lyon name, the last a gem of verbal portraiture.

However, before it is engraved in bronze or silver, as befits such a sterling effort, the author may wish to consider replacing the words ***improvisi*** and ***pepulit***, which end lines six and 16 respectively. As other readers may have noted, the former scans as four long syllables, the latter as three short: both words therefore violate the rules of the Sapphic metre.

A simple substitution for each (***insolentis*** and ***repellit***) would require little or no change to the excellent English version.

ARMAND D'ANGOUR
Letter to Daily Telegraph

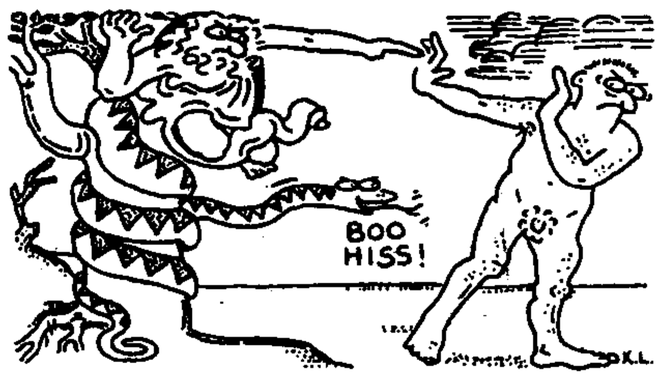
Lofts on the Park, formerly Hackney College, has architectural features that even Christopher Wren would probably have been proud of.

Promotional letter

Yesterday, in between massacring nettles and slashing at holly thickets, I finished the novel I have been writing for the past year. I'd already written the end, but there was a piece of the jigsaw, a seven-page scene in the last chapter, which I had been putting off for days. My other half was on the button when he said, in a fax from Kathmandu, how hard it must be to say "That's it." There's lots more to do in the way of insertions and revisions, but the exciting part – transcribing a kind of movie that had been unreeling intermittently in my head – is over.

A little moved and shaken, I told my dinner companions last night that I'd finished. All movers and shakers themselves in the real world, they looked at me speculatively and mercifully had the sophistication or the lack of interest not to ask: "What's it all about?" Because that's what I've now got to find out.

VICTORIA GLENDINNING
Daily Telegraph



Then Big Brother attracted a huge mob to come and watch the expulsions from the anti-Paradise of those voted out. Davina, the presenter, dashes through them like a frenzied post-modernist Anglo-Saxon messenger in *Alice*, inciting and feeding their lines, but all scripted, of course, unlike the mob leaders in Portsmouth. She is the apt embodiment of clamorous triviality or the purity of purposelessness.

BERNARD CRICK
Guardian

CONTRIBUTORS: Will Croxford, Tim Mickleburgh, Nicholas Reyland, 'Cheryl', Richard Croker, Michael Mansfield.

£10 paid for entries

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH

"This is the best secret weapon against juvenile vandalism we've ever discovered" said a spokesman for the shopping mall in Wollongong, near Sydney. "For years we've had problems with gangs of teenagers loitering at store entrances and getting into trouble, but Bing seems to have sorted them out, once and for all.

"We started playing Bing Crosby's records through the mall's PA system as an experiment two months ago, and quickly found that teenagers who normally hang around causing trouble couldn't stand the music or lyrics, and soon moved on. It appears that young ears just can't cope with the old crooner, and our crime

rate has dropped almost to zero. One song in particular, 'My Heart Is Taking Lessons', drove them up the wall, and even though most of the shopkeepers hate it too, that's a small price to pay for improved security. Several teenagers have admitted to us that the old fogey music is keeping them away, and we're also planning to install pink lighting in public places, to discourage loitering at night. The pink colour highlights facial blemishes like teenage acne, you see, so that'll also keep them away." *(South China Morning Post, 15/8/00. Spotter Roger Wells)*

—o—

"We are the victims in this case, not the guilty party," declared Jeffrey Bruette and Brian Kuehn to reporters, after filing an $8 million lawsuit against Montgomery County Police. "It's true that we videotaped our teenage neighbour engaging in sexual acts with our dogs, but that doesn't mean we're pornographers, and we demand compensation for the economic and emotional damage we've suffered."

Bruette then explained the circumstances that had led to the making of the unusual video. "Last year, our juvenile neighbour began visiting our home to use our computer and play with our dogs. We became concerned that he might be stealing from us, so we installed a nanny-cam, so we could watch him and see if he was thieving while we were out of the house. We left him alone there for a weekend, and when we got back, we sat down to watch the tape. He wasn't stealing, but we were shocked when we saw him repeatedly having sex with our dogs, mostly by himself, but once with another teenage boy. We didn't know what to do with the tape, so we showed it to a few friends, and made a few copies, and before we knew it, the police were at the door, charging us with child abuse and child pornography. I got six months probation, Brian was given community service, we both lost our jobs, the dogs were taken away by the authorities, and we were shunned by the community. It was awful. We had to leave Germantown and move to Pennsylvania, and we demand compensation."

A spokesman for the Montgomery County Police Department pointed out that the teenager had also been charged with two counts of unnatural and perverted sex offences, but otherwise refused to comment. *(Gazette Regional News [Kensington, Maryland], 9/8/00. Spotter: M.J. Woodhead)*

—o—

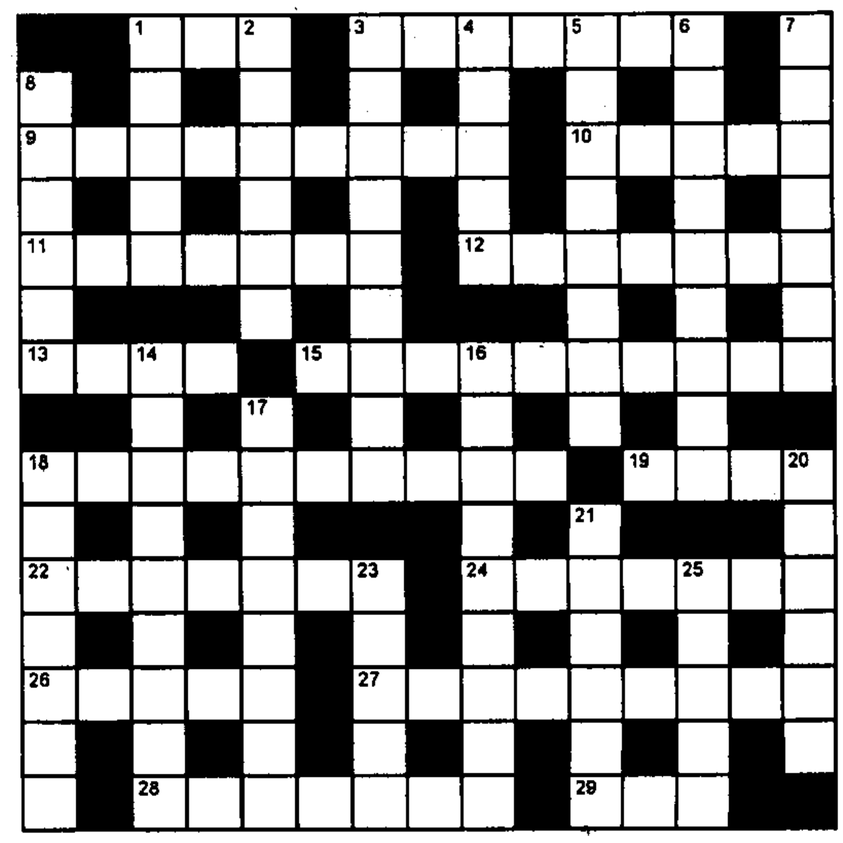
"It was terrible," Simon Hayoe told reporters outside his family's home in Dogsthorpe. "The whole family had gone out to play Bingo, and when we returned we found Shaun dead on the settee. We called for an ambulance, but when it arrived they were unable to pick him up, because he weighed thirty-two stones. The fire brigade were called, and they had to take out the front window and knock down the wall, then winch him out using a ladder. They then laid his body, naked, on the front lawn under a green tarpaulin, and sent for a vehicle recovery truck, to help winch him aboard. But the driver failed to strap Shaun's body on properly, and he rolled off the truck as it was travelling along Central Avenue.

"A service at Christchurch was also ruled out, because they couldn't fit him through the door, and we had to settle for a blessing at the cemetery instead. Cremation was out of the question, because his body was too big for the incinerator. It's sad. Just last year, a doctor offered to wire Shaun's jaw up in a bid to control his continuous eating, and warned him that he'd be dead by 30 if he didn't stop. Shaun was 27, so the doctor was obviously very good at his job."

A post mortem revealed that Shaun died from thrombosis. (Peterborough Herald & Post, 22/8/00. Spotter: Jackson@logica.com)

EYE CROSSWORD 165

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1/3 ac. Voyeuristic entertainment supplied by spacious knocking-shop long giving way to resistance (3,7)
3 (see 1 ac.)
9 Sting behind as a member of Mensa? (5-4)
10 Medium extra Dior former model Rex shed (5)
11 Alan Clark endlessly screwed student out of town (7)
12 She ruled those common people with iron (7)
13 Form of address, by the way, for the old PM (3,1)
15 "Huge erection shown by broadcaster's piss-poor" – Brenda (10)
18 No doubt it can sense more than one sort of crack! (7,3)
19 Cunning liar has no hesitation (4)
22 'Take out former lover' sort of plot (7)
24 Moral fanatic put Iran in the shit (7)
26 Helped make a pudding of, for instance, *Grauniad*'s chief hack (5)
27 Yet Archer condemned deception (9)
28 Pavarotti's audibly tender (7)
29 Party's ways going to Prescott's head (3)

DOWN

1 Somewhat blue appearance of our leader? (5)
2 Batman's place to leave hat off when getting married (6)
3 The sort to rudely interrupt the Queen's Speech? (9)
4 Friar Tuck-like in bathrobe (see-through) (5)
5 Rocky with reported piece of sexually explicit material (4,4)
6 Bloody aristocrat holding papers for publication (3,6)
7 Southern pro's no sort of angel (7)
8/18 dn One of Jack Straw's hobby-horses: giving protection to hunters (6,7)
14 Peel, pissed, is very clinging (4-5)
16 Late news: loads of money put up by hacks! (4,5)
17 Fond of an orgy now and then (3,3,2)
18 (see 8)
20 Kissinger on top of very old ruler (5,1)
21 With which the Tate has outraged decent people? (6)
23 Perhaps duchess makes boob joining heads of Light Entertainment (5)
25 Idiot with Brenda in flipping exercise (5)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 15.9.00. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN.

Solution to Crossword No. 164

Winner: MRS N. WATERMAN

ACROSS: 1 Bitch 4 Womens lib 9 Break wind 10 Magic 11/12 Summer recess 12 (see 11) 15 Mandatory 17 Tutsi 18 Actor 20 Shrinkage 22 Spoilt 23 Quebec 26 Dildo 27 Chicanery 28 Royalties 29 Roses.

DOWN: 1 Baby 2 Treason 3 Hokum 4 White House 5 Made 6 Number Ten 7 Leg-rest 8 Backslides 13 Ambassador 14 Hydraulics 16 April Fool 19 Trolley 21 Archers 24 Blair 25 Eyes 27 CBI.

•AUTUMN BOOKS•

The Book You've All Been Waiting For...

HAGUE'S MEMOIRS

IN THE SHIT

(Surely 'Jungle'? Ed.)

BEFORE he could walk he wanted to be Prime Minister but Fate decreed that he would never make it to the very top.

They called him "Hazzabeen" and now, for the first time, William Hague looks back over a lifetime of dedicated service to the Conservative Party.

Read it all only in Private Eye...

Chapter One

If only ill-health had prevented me from becoming leader of the Tory Party, I wouldn't be the failure I am today.

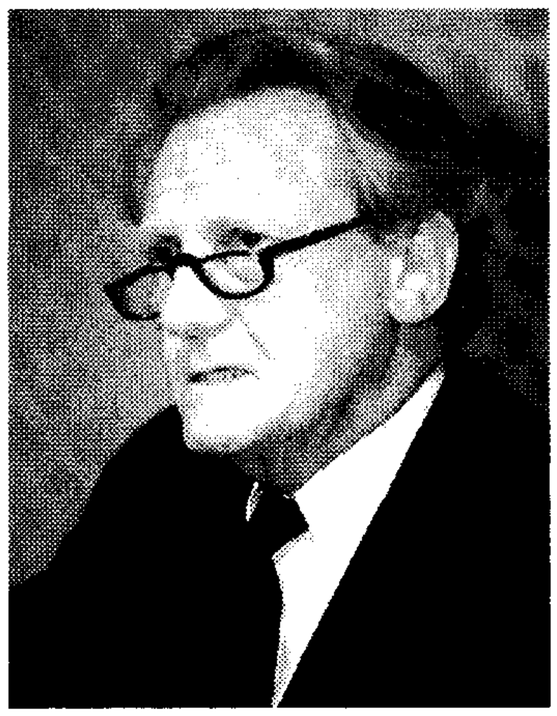
I remember the doctor's words all too clearly. "There's nothing wrong with you, William. You'll have to run for Leader of the Party."

My wife too could have been a lot *less* supportive at the time.

"Go for it, William," she urged. "You could become leader and spend less time with your family." And she was right.

Chapter Two

Mrs Thatcher let me down badly by continually supporting me in my campaign. If it hadn't been for her I could still be downing 14



William Hagueltine

pints a day back in Yorkshire. But she stood firm in her obstinate way and insisted that I should be leader. No wonder the country's in such a mess.

Chapter Three

Michael Heseltine is the real villain of the story. His pathetic failure to stand against me, claiming he'd had a heart attack in Venice, doomed the Conservative Party to fifty years in the wilderness. I will never forgive him.

TOMORROW: Hague blames traitor Major – "He should have stayed on."

© Anthony Sherpa-Howard, MailTrash Productions.

The other book you've all been waiting for....

EXCLUSIVE TO PRIVATE EYE

THE TURDS
IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Spiggy: It was in 1963 that I had just got out of bed after several weeks. And that was the day we were going to record my new song 'Love is the thing. Hate isn't'.

Smudge: Actually, it was me that woke up that day. I had a chord in my head which turned out to be a whole song when George Martin got hold of it.

Krishna: Hari, Hari whilst stocks of the book last!

Ringo: Gordon puffed up to the top of the hill where the Fat Controller was pouring himself a large vodka and rolling an enormous spliff. "Hey, man!" he cried, as Thomas turned into a marmalade *(continued page 94)*

"You can't tackle him without going through his agent first"

A Doctor writes

Nigella Poisoning

AS A doctor I am often asked "Am I suffering from an outbreak of Pan-Fried Salmonella with Mushy Peas?" *(Shurely shome mishtake? Ed.)*

The simple answer is "Yes", one can easily develop Nigella Poisoning, or *Plethora culinari televisionensis*, to give it the proper medical term. This is a simple allergy to new cookery programmes on Channel Four, where the patient watches scenes of the presenter's perfect lifestyle, children, kitchen, friends, hair, etc, and develops symptoms including depression, irritation, nausea, which *(cont'd. p. 94)*

© A. Doctor

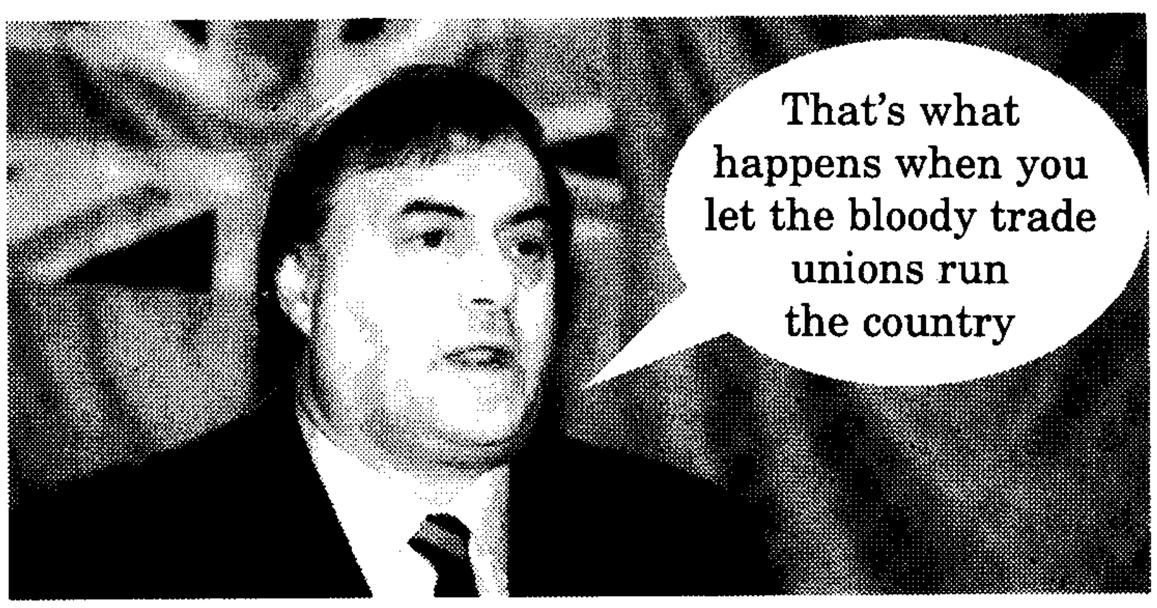
Situations Vacant

Britain has a number of vacancies in certain departments, including teaching, medicine, technology, engineering, law enforcement, the army, the professions and everything else.

If you are living abroad and possess any skill at all, we are very keen to hear from you.

Feel free to enter the country by any means (illegal or otherwise) and apply to **The Great Britain Job Offer, Enoch Powell House, Dover.**

PRESCOTT LASHES FRENCH



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Bonjour!

That's European for hullo!

And the good news is that Cherie and I are back from a wonderful holiday, ready to hit the ground running on all cylinders and with our batteries raring to go!

Doesn't it do us all good to get away for a few weeks, staying with generous friends and business contacts in agreeable villas all round the continent.

How small some of our worries can seem when we look at them from beside a swimming pool, or across a Tuscan olive grove!

Hey! I'll be frank. When I went away I was a little bit wound-up about those photos of me and baby Leo which had appeared in the St. Albion's Advertiser against my wishes.

Even on holiday, I got pretty ratty, I can tell you, when I took the family to church and found a local photographer waiting outside with a bottle of wine and asking Euan to pose with it lying in the road!

But then I said to myself, "Look Tony, these people are only human, and they're only doing their job like the rest of us. They're bound to be interested in anything you or your family do, because you're the most talked-about English vicar anyone has ever seen!"

So I decided to take a leaf out of the good book, when it says, "Let not your wrath go down upon the Sun, no, nor upon the Mirror neither." (*Your 100 Best Proverbs*, Ch.7)

And that's when I resolved that I should learn to "forgive and forget" as our Lord put it (*Little Book Of Forgiving And Forgetting*, Ch.15 v.3) and to make a completely fresh start and to show that we really want to be friends with everyone working in the local media!

I put my thoughts on this into a chorus,

which Mr. Campbell and I have recorded on a special tape for our popular local hospital radio service, "Get Well Soon FM". Here is how it goes:

"What a friend we have in Tony
What a friend he is indeed,
What a friend we have in Tony
He's the guy who's born to lead."
(repeat)

© Words and music copyright A.R.P. Blair, with additional material by A. Campbell

Your friend,

Tony

Announcement

There will be a meeting of AAA (Albion Alcoholics Anonymous) in the Church Hall on Friday. Anyone who is prone to get drunk and start ranting about how useless the Vicar is should take advantage of this meeting. Cherie's father, Mr Booth (or "Booze" as he is known in the family!), would be well advised to attend or he might find himself in prison. T.B.

To Remember In Your Prayers

Mr.Branson (right), who has offered to take over the running of the Parish tombola from Mr. Camelot (entirely free of charge I may add, apart from his expenses, of course!) Let us pray that Mrs. Shovelton and her ladies come to a sensible decision on this one, when they have their steering committee meeting next week, and choose the right person for this very important job. Mr. Branson is a very old friend, but I would not of course for a moment wish to influence the good ladies by revealing that he is the man I have chosen for the job! T.B.

From Mr Blunkett, Chairman of Governors at the St Albions Secondary School.

600 words that all pupils will be expected to spell

Everyone	And
Thinks	Does
The	A
Vicar	Terrific
Is	Job
Marvellous	Here

The rest of the words can be obtained on request from Mr Campbell.

Parish Postbag

From Canon D. Owen

Dear Sir,

I would like to put on record once and for all that all the vicar's ideas about his so-called "Third Way" etc. were all taken from me. It was me who thought it all up as long ago as

Yours faithfully,
D. Owen (Doctor of Divinity),
London SDP NBG

From Mr. Woy Jenkins (transcribed from the vicarage answering machine by Mr. Campbell)

I was vewy, vewy, vewy distwessed to learn that my far-weaching pwoposals for wadical weform of the pwocedures for elections to the Pawochial Church Council, involving a gweat measure of pwoportional repwesentation have been most wudely wejected. For thwee years I have worked night and day on wesearching this pwoject, for no more weward than the occasional cwate of clawet. Yet now I discover that all labours are in vain and to be thwown into the wubbish as if they were no more than

Yours sincerely,
Woy Jenkins,
Oxford Road

The Editor reserves the right to cut all letters from former members of the so-called St. Albion's Gang of Four for obvious reasons.

Cherie's Recipe For RICH SUMMER PUDDING

(held over from last issue)

Ingredients

Fruits of office, huge amounts of bread, bags of dough and plenty of gravy.

Directions

Mix well and add sweeteners to taste.
Soak until nicely rich.
Serves one.

© World copyright, Cherie Booth QC matrix.com

Who Are They?

The Women Making the Most Important Decision In Lottery History

Will it be Richard Branson's People's Lottery or the People's Lottery run by Richard Branson?

Dame Ethel Prunehat, 59, Chair of the Lottery Commission. Described by colleagues as "the ice-cold iron fist inside the velvet trousers", Dame Ethel has a lifetime's experience of sitting on committees.

Dame Helena Bonham-Shovell, 73, Deputy Chair of the Lottery Commission and an expert in Icelandic Studies at the University of Haywards Heath (formerly Three Bridges Polytechnic).

Dame Virago Amazon, 87, formerly editor-in-chief of The Boudicca Press. Dame Virago is described by colleagues as an elderly woman who used to have a job in publishing.

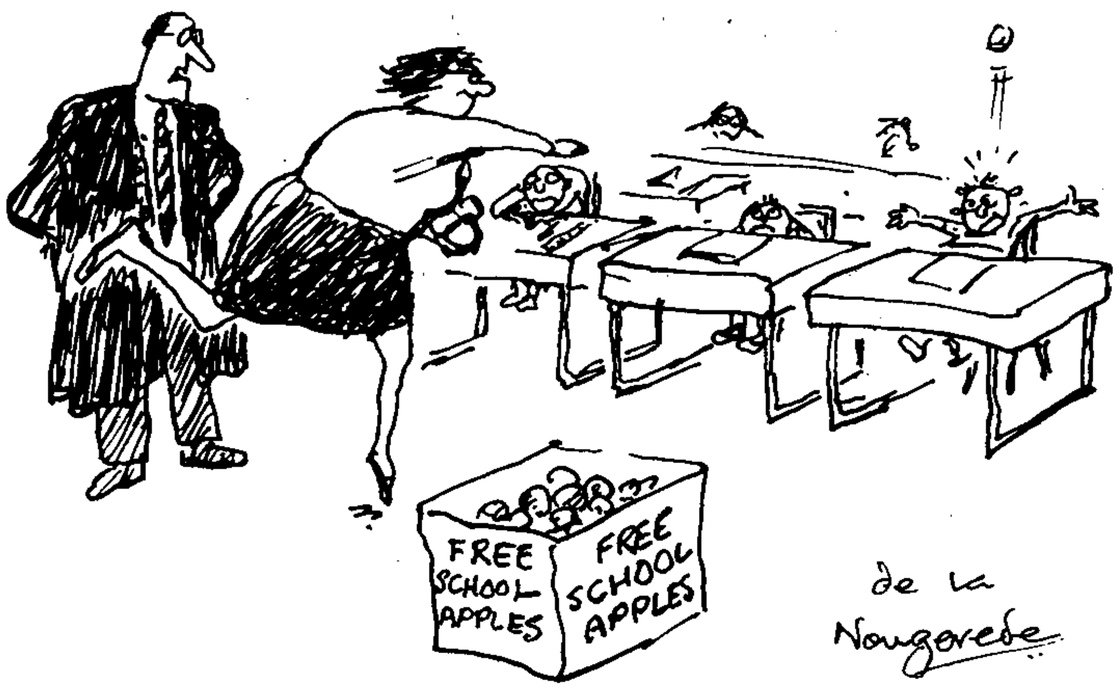
Dame Charity Shoppe, 98, Founder of the High Street Charity Shoppe chain. Dame Charity is described by colleagues as "the sharpest mind on the Lottery Commission."

Dr. Token-Man, 47. Nothing is known about Dr. Token-Man, except that he has a beard and is thinking of changing his sex in order to get on more committees. (*That's enough Ed*)

Who Do *You* Want To Run The Lottery?

	Richard Branson
	Posh 'n' Becks
	Dr. David Owen
	Greg Dyke
	Lord Rees-Mogg
	Charlie Dimmock
	Nasty Nick

Ring now on the Lotto Hotline 08987237421 and *you* can choose Richard Branson



"Hand them out, Miss Chubwell. Hand them out"

OWEN SAYS 'IT WAS ALL MY IDEA'

by Our Political Staff
Shirley Shome-Mishtake Williams

LORD OWEN sensationally claimed last night that the entire New Labour phenomenon was based on his original vision in the nineteen-eighties.

"I had it all planned out when I was running the SDP," he told reporters. "A new political party believing only in gaining power with no ideas and a smarmy figurehead who would prove ultimately disappointing."

Dr Whowen is 78.

HAGUE SINKS 14 POINTS

by Our Other Political Staff
Bud Weiser and **Carl S. Berg**

TORY leader William Hague yesterday claimed that he had downed a record 14 points in the course of a day and that he was "none the worse for it."

"Me and my mates decided to paint the town blue," he told the "lads'" magazine, *Tosser*. "We went round knocking on doors, and everywhere we went, we sank another two points."

"I never lost control," he went on. "I still remained in charge of the Tory Party. Indeed I could have sunk a lot more, and probably will."

William Hague is 15.

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW

Ye Plymouth Argus

20 September 1619

Ye Voyage Of Ye Mayflower

'Damnation Upon Ye, England' Quoth Pilgrim Father

by Our Man In Plymouth **Hoe He**

A tiny band of persecuted free-thinkers yefterday set sail for ye Newe Worlde in ye good ship Mayflower, to seek a newe life in ye Americas.

Ye pafsenger liste recordeth ye following pilgrims: **Master Martin Amis**, a scribe of Kensington. **Master S. Rushdie**, a Moorish scribe who hath been accused of blasphemy. **Master Anthony Holden Esq.**, chronicler of ye royal tittle-tattle and author of *Ye Bonnie Prince Charlie I Never Knew.*

All ye pilgrims are convinced that in ye Americas their talents will at last be properly appreciated by ye local indigenous persons.

"Ye Britain is finished," quoth Mafter Holden. "It is stuck in ye Middle Ages with their out-of-date royal family, their feudal class system and their philistine obsession with ye magical feates of Mafter Harry Potter, instead of my own brilliant works such as *Ye Tchaikowsky I Never Knew* and *Ye Shakespeare I Never Knew Either.*

Added Mafter Amis, "Ye native Americans inhabit ye land of ye free. We are all fed up with Britain with its pitiful advances, carping critics and dreary women, who we are going to trade in for an American model."

YE LATE NEWS

Miftrefs Winterton, a self-confefsed witch from the county of Saffex, has alfo decided to seek a new life in ye plantations. "Perhaps ye native American critics will realise how brilliant my books are. They can't speak English, which should help."

YE EVEN LATER NEWS

An hundred thoufand Red Indians have set sail for England at the newf of the Pilgrims' arrival.

On Other Pages

How Ye New Tobacco Will Help You To Live Longer by Ye Learned Doctor Stuttaford. 2

Why Ye Potato Will Never Catch On by Master Paul Johnson 3

and introducing

Young Person's View: An Exciting New Column by Master Will Deedes (who is aged only 15) 4

BLONDE WOMAN EATS CHOCOLATE AT WEDDING

Exclusive Picures Pages 1-24

On Other Pages:

Russia disintegrates 25

America burns 26

Europe in gridlock 27

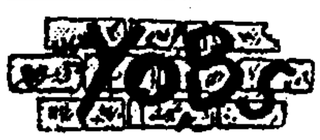
Where Are They Now?

No 94. Ken Livingstone

FOR a brief period in the spring of the year 2000, Britain's newspapers and television were entirely dominated by the figure of one man: "Red Ken" Livingstone.

As Ken embarked on his heroic struggle to become Mayor of London, his every utterance made front-page news. His image filled every television screen morning, noon and night, and commentators warned of the years of chaos and turmoil which would engulf London if he was elected.

Then he became Mayor, and nothing happened at all. Soon he was a forgotten figure, as much a thing of the past as trams, hansom cabs and Jeffrey Archer. *(Shurely shome mishtake? Ed)*



HUSBAND

Late News

CARNIVAL RUINED

THE annual Notting Hill Murder Carnival was spoilt once again by outbreaks of dancing.

Said a police spokesman, "It is such a pity. People come here to enjoy themselves and stab each other to death and then an irresponsible minority ruins everything by going into the streets and dancing around."

He continued: "It is sad that the police have to get involved and end up doing the samba on the pavement to a calypso beat, when we would much rather be standing around watching the murdering." *(Reuters)*

UPFRONTERS

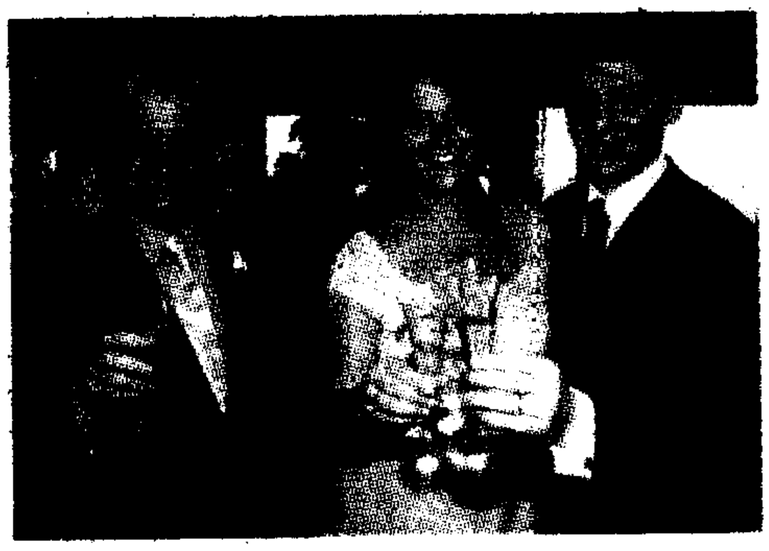
Exclusive Pictures from the Turner/Bovey Wedding of the Millennium
The top stars turn out for Grant and Anthea's big day...

WHO'S that showbiz giant with international star clairvoyant **Mystic Meg**? Why it's TV's **Andy** from Big Brother, or is it Phil? Either way Meg, he's watching you! Talk about star gazing!?

MR. BOVEY's been granted the Turner Prize!? It's love at First Bite?! Or are they Flaking it? Anyway, **Anthea**'s the biggest star in the Milky Way and **Grant**'s the most famous man in the Galaxy! Honest!

I predict a heavy shower of **tears** from Meridian TV's star weathergirl **Trish Brightwell** (shortly to be seen on the Shopping Channel's "Celebrity Checkout" slot!!) And who is she with? Why it's **Kelly Dee**, star of the Channel 5 Docusoap "Receptionists From Hell"! Three tears for Grant and Anthea, all you celebrities!

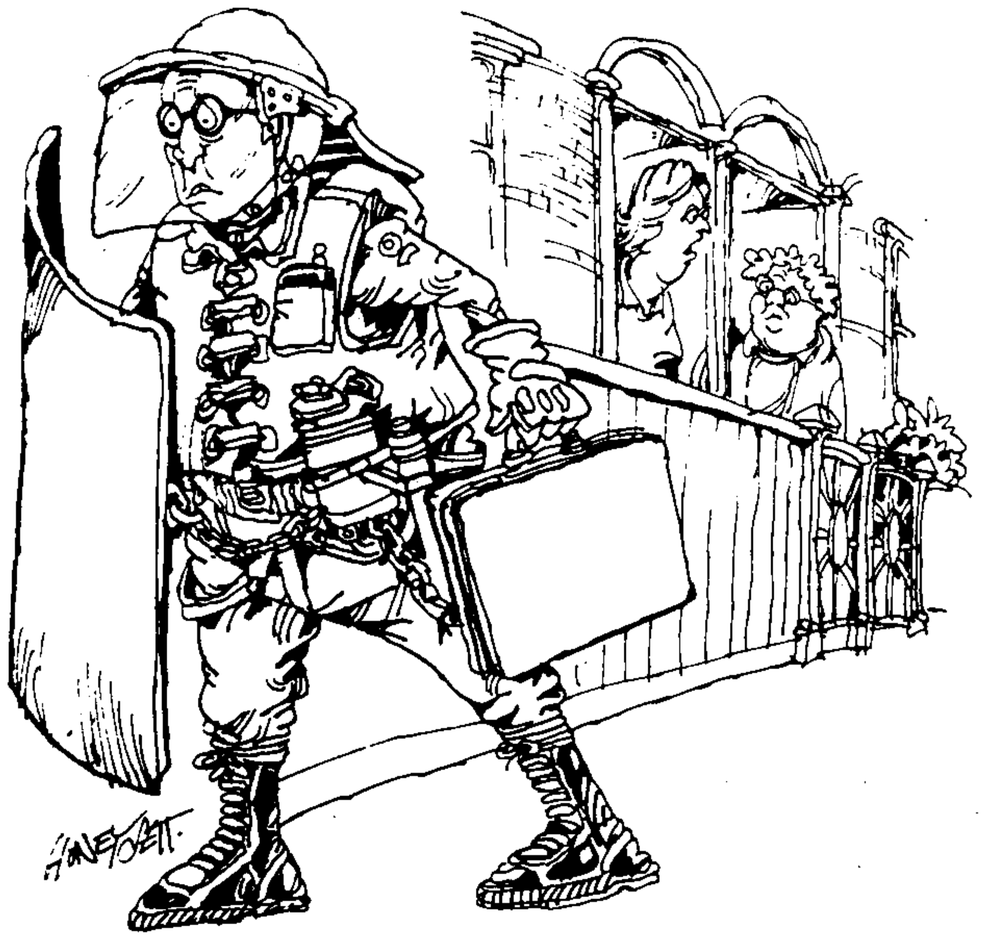
Talk about Stars in their Eyes! Super celeb **Matthew Kelly** is toasting a bubbly blonde! And it's **Debbie** "TV's Paul Daniel's wife" **McGee** of course! Perhaps this happy couple of superstars will both disappear!!



HOW Mooo-ving! It's Emmerdale superstar **Sheree Murphy** with star Quiz Maestro **Bob Holness** and the hottest young continuity announcer on children's ITV – **Andy Simons**!? (or is it Simon Andies?) You won't forget his name in a hurry!?!

HELLO! Hello! Hello! It's Crimewatch UK's star Detective, **Inspector Bramstead** of Thames Valley C.I.D.! And who is he trying to collar – why it's Gold-Blend-TV-Coffee-Girl turned Call My Bluff panellist **Suzie Burkiss**!! Or maybe I've got that wrong and it's someone from Brookside talking to the presenter of Sky TV's Celebrity Holiday Programme "Star Treks"!? Or maybe it's GMTV's **Penny Smith** and **John Stapleton** or **Eamonn Holmes** and **Fiona Phillips**? How am I supposed to know? (*You're fired! Ed*)

WARNING: These amazing pictures are exclusive to Upfronters and any unauthorised use of these incredibly important photographs will be punished by death.



"Riot police? No – he's still a teacher"

Media News

BBC'S SECRET PLANS FOR 'FUNERAL OF THE CENTURY'

by Our Media Staff **Phil Airtime**

BBC boss Greg Dyke has masterminded one of the biggest projects in the Corporation's history – plans for day-long coverage of the death of Sir Reginald Kray, the well-loved King of London's East End.

Mr. David Dimbleby will head a team of 24 commentators, including his late father, who will cover the state funeral, following the cortège as it passes through the streets of the East End which were the backdrop to "Reggie's" colourful murders.

House of Windsor

Dame Barbara Windsor, the so-called "Enforcer's Sweetheart", will lead thousands of mourners in singing solemn Cockney songs, such as "Maybe it's because I'm a murderer", "Hands up Mother Brown" and "My old man said 'Kill Jack the Hat McVitie' ".

Full details on Ceefax p. 861

BIG BROTHER VIEWING FIGURES LATEST

by **Phil Airtime**

LATEST viewing figures released by Channel Four have revealed that an amazing *50 million people* in Britain — an astounding 90% of the population — *aren't* tuning into hit TV series Big Brother.

A spokesman for the silent majority said: "It's quite astounding how many people are totally disinterested in this programme and its personalities — just think, all those people out there who have better things to do with their lives besides watch a show about people sitting around in their pants, smoking fags and talking about themselves."

THE SUN SAYS

You Make Us Sick, Monsieur Fat Frog!

Millions of British holidaymakers are dying in their cars outside Calais, while you and your selfish strikers are whingeing about the price of a gallon of petrol.

Pay up and shut up, Monsieur Snail-Guzzler. That's what The Sun says.

If it says "100 Francs a litre", bloody well pay it!

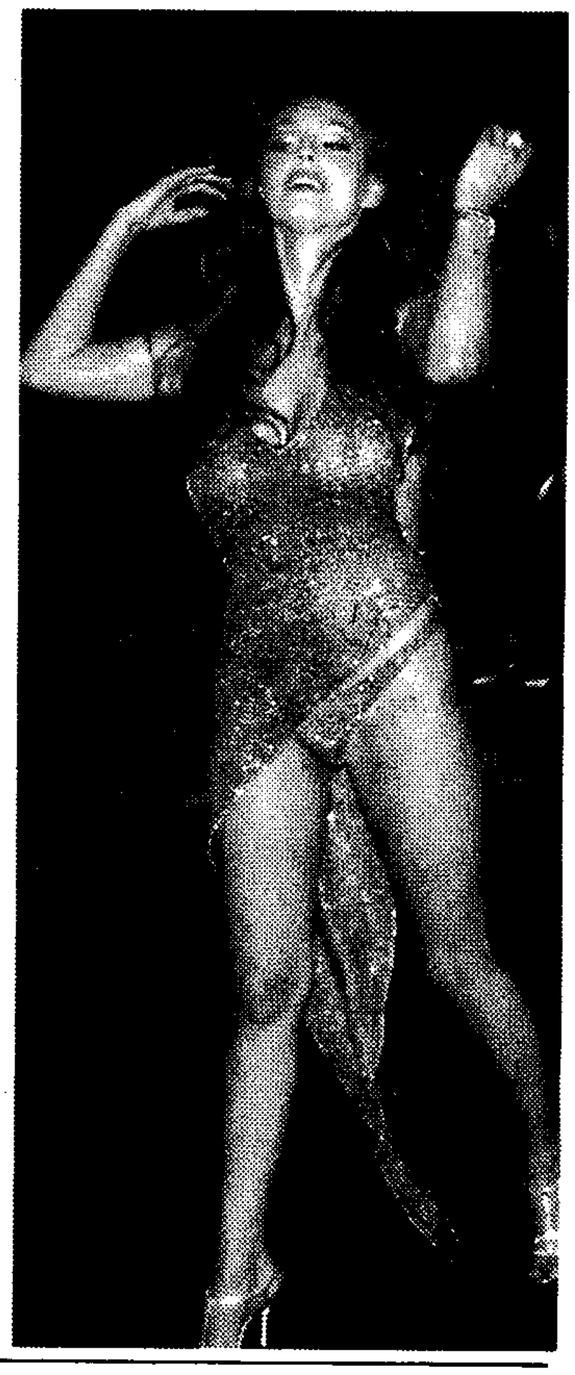
Join The Sun's "Dump The Pump" Campaign

What a disgrace the price of petrol is in this country.

Isn't it time we said we'd had enough, and stopped paying the exorbitant prices the forecourt little Hitlers are demanding!

If it says "100p a litre", bloody well don't pay it!

'SNATCH' PREMIERES IN WEST END



'MAD-DOG DISEASE' SPREADS

by Our Medical Staff **Bea Essy**

THE SO-CALLED "Mad-Dog Disease", which attacks the brain and turns its victims into psycopaths, is on the increase again in Ulster, say experts.

Symptoms include bombing, shooting and maiming anyone who disagrees with the sufferer.

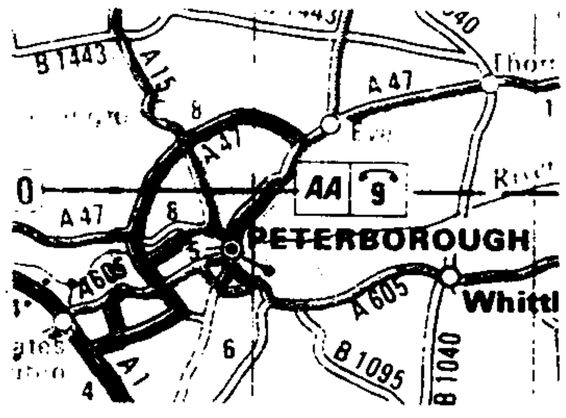
Said Mental Health spokesman Peter Mandelson, "There is no cause for alarm. The instances of Mad-Dog Disease (technically known as UDA) are sporadic and easily dealt with."

Barking

Mr Mandelson concluded, "The condition is not fatal, except of course for anyone who gets shot by paramilitaries."

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

101 Things You Can Mistake For A Paedophile



No. 1. 'Paedo-borough'

WORLD'S GREATEST EVER QC RETIRES

by our Legal Staff **Joshua Rosenbeard**

THE LAST of the great legal giants has bowed out.

Last night the entire legal world was in a state of shock at the news that libel King, George Carperson, has hung up his wig and gown for the last time.

After 50 years at the bar (and almost as many in court) George Carphone is to retire, at the early age of 93.

LEADING ADVOCAAT

The news sent shock waves through the cloistered world of the Inns of Court, as tear-stained clerks and weeping barristers fought to come to terms with the prospect of a world without the man they called simply "that little bastard Carman". (surely "my learned friend"?)

Said one eminent silk, his voice trembling with emotion, "This is truly extraordinary news – perhaps now I will get some of his briefs."

Said another, "The amazing thing about George was how skilful he was at making money. We all admired and envied his incomparable genius for extracting the folding stuff from everyone he met."

The Wit and Wisdom of George Carman
Highlights of a 30 year career

On his client **Jeremy Thorpe** (1979): "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, my client may be a homicidal poof, but since when has that been a crime?"

On his client **Ken Dodd** (1987): "OK, so my client may have fiddled the taxman out of £2 million. But which one of us has not done the same?"

On his client **Mohammed Al Fugger** (1999): "You see before you one of the finest English gentlemen it has ever been my privilege to take money from."

On his client **Richard Branson** (1999): "You see before you one of the finest English gentlemen there has ever been, apart, of course, from my good friend Mr. Fugger."

Cross-examining **David Mellor** (1994): "Mr. Mellor, I put it to you, that you are a four-eyed git."

Questioning **Miss Gillian Taylforth** (1996): "Perhaps I could give you a lift home in my Range Rover?"

Cross-examining **Mr. Neil Hamilton** (1999): "I put it to you that your only concern in life was to take money from anyone who wanted you to represent them and argue their case. Have you no shame?"

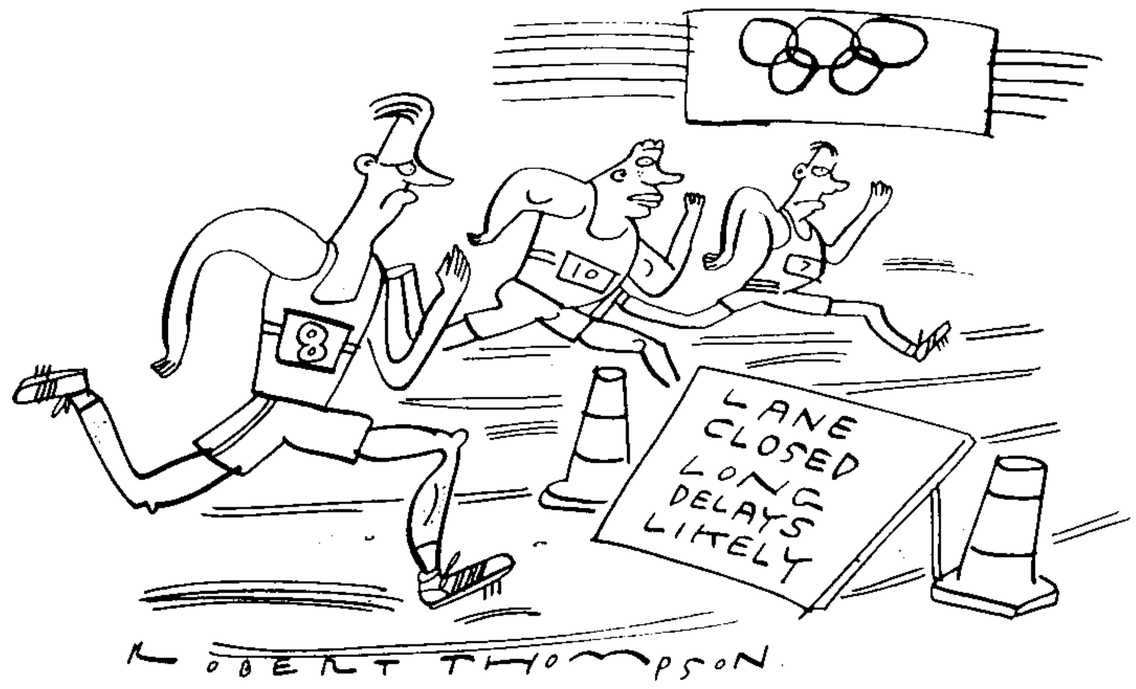
To **Mr. Alan Rubbisher**, Editor of The Grauniad: "I have pleasure in enclosing my latest fee – account totalling £2 billion, not including refreshers, and would remind you that failure to comply could lead to me acting for the other side tomorrow morning."

TOILETS
As the islands sewage systems are very antiquated we would advise using waste paper bins

Thomson Holidays

- The time spent waiting for an opera will be cut to a maximum of six months

NHS shake-up revealed, Monoptica www



WHY WE MUST NEVER FORGET DIANA

by Phil Space

PRINCESS DIANA left a hole in our hearts and an even bigger hole in our newspapers.

On this, the anniversary of her tragic death, we must ensure that we do not forget to put in a huge piece regurgitating all the stuff we've already written about her.

Because if we forget to commemorate her death, we will have to think up something else to put in our newspapers.

That is why ordinary hacks like me must never, never

(continued for 94 years)

Advertisement

To commemorate the third anniversary of Diana's death, we proudly present this lovingly restored

ANTIQUE CONSPIRACY THEORY

to keep and treasure forever.

The creator of this conspiracy theory, Monsieur Fugger, has been working on these for years and this is undoubtedly his finest creation.

Woven together from a patchwork of half truths and ill-informed rumours, this beautiful piece has been richly gilded by Monsieur Fugger and lovingly crafted into an elaborate piece of work which, even though it has no base, has a simply breathtaking brass neck*.

Send a cheque for just £2,000,000 plus a British passport for postage and packaging to Fugger Industries – c/o Harrods, Kensington, London.

**Comes with a genuine Certificate of Inauthenticity*

New QCD Offer from Gnome

BOOZET'S CARMAN

Featuring all your favourite operatic hits including *Putting On The Writs*, *We'll Gather Libels In The Spring Again*, *Oh My Pretty Little Black-Eyed QC* and *Fees Ain't Wot They Used To Be (They're Much Higher)*. Plus bonus track *I'm Getting Married Again In The Morning*.

☆ Starring ☆

Luciano Pavarotti as "The Libel King"
and the **BBC Women's Chorus** as the "Cigarette Lovelies"

Send "three hundred tenners" now to avoid disappointment

DIARY

Unlike the vast majority in this elderly, enseamed country, who are only too content to obey the Royal whim of a 70 year old wholly unelected woman, I am a heavyweight intellectual who is not afraid to nearly stick his neck on the block and stand up for what he believes to be self-evidently true.

Last year, I drew down the wrath of the stagnant, hidebound Establishment and created a national nervous breakdown when I declared in the important Tuesday edition of *The Daily Express* that Harry Potter was — and I quote — "symptomatic of a nation that has lost its way bigtime and would prefer its young to carry on reading children's books rather than help create a written constitution". This drew forth a mailbag of anything up to a dozen angry letters — but in my burning pursuit of freedom and liberty I would, I swore, perforce ne'er be silenced.

In February of this year, I again got an article of mine not only commissioned but published — this time in the historic *Observer*, of which I was once nearly Features Editor. In this hard-hitting piece, "Wake up, Britain!", I fearlessly described David Beckham as "only a footballer, albeit a brilliant one of his type", Princess Anne as "a middle-aged woman who we would frankly never have heard of if she didn't just happen to be the daughter of the so-called Monarch" and — most famously — Cabinet Minister Peter Mandelson as "a spin-doctor". And — memorably — I provoked national furore when I added that The Spice Girls were — and I quote — "not very good singers and not all that attractive though undeniably popular".

Harsh words indeed. All too predictably, The British Establishment did not take kindly to this monumental, nay blistering attack on itself, and, in the well-trodden path it has trodden so well, pathwise, these past 1000-odd years, it responded in the only way it knows how — by ignoring me.

To some extent, I confess, my departure from these fair shores nearly amounts to a forlorn confession of failure. O'er these past nearly thirty years — through the controversial publication of my first book nearly questioning the role of Monarch, "Charles: A Prince for All Seasons", through to my courageous, searing attack on a senior Royal icon, "God Bless You, Ma'am: A Photographic Celebration of the Queen Mother at 80", right up to my present

ANTHONY HOLDEN BIDS FAREWELL

"Tony Holden – The Columnist The Royals Skip" column in the brave new *Daily Express* in which I recently had the republican nerve to criticise Prince William ("Let's face it, Wills — that new haircut simply doesn't suit you") — I have been banging my head against the Establishment's all too solid brick wall in a vain attempt to make this country stop playing at childish games and simply *grow up*.

In my hard-hitting Open Letter to Tony Blair, printed in the influential *GQ* magazine ("Dear Tony... You will be glad to hear that as a leading constitutionalist, I approve of much of that of which you are doing, but it would be nice if you could do a bit more in roughly the same direction. Anyway, have a good holiday, and hope to be able to fit you in for a meeting soon. Yours Ever, Tony. PS Don't you just *hate* so-called Prince Charles? I do, and I'm not frightened to say it!") I tried to bring this god-forsaken country to its senses.

By now I was nearly a founder-member of influential reform groups such as Charter 88, a very select group of intellectuals and opinion formers which met for dinner twice-yearly in my intimate Hampstead home with the aim of increasing the spread of democracy to all the people and not just to a tiny head-in-the-clouds elite. But to no avail. My hard-won wisdom was falling on the deaf ears of a country steeped in lost dreams of Empire. No, they didn't like it one little bit when I pointed out that we no longer ruled India. I had nearly risked my career by publicly calling on The Queen to resign ("Time to Call It a Day, Ma'am", *Observer* June 5, 1998). At the same time condemning Teletubbies as "yet another symptom of our regressive culture". But I had been met only with rebuffs.

So now, with Coriolanus, I am mustering the arrogance to banish you, Oh Britain. Yes, I now find myself forced to teach Britain a painful, yes, but salutary lesson by moving Stateside, like Christopher Columbus before me. Already, I have put the pettifogging elitist concerns of fusty old Blighty behind me to research modern, go-ahead articles for a variety of American publications in the magnificent New York Public Library — and I have already nearly sold a highly-researched essay ("Escaping from the Shadow of Wills: A Future for Prince Harry?") to a leading American journal. And yes, I feel at home here.

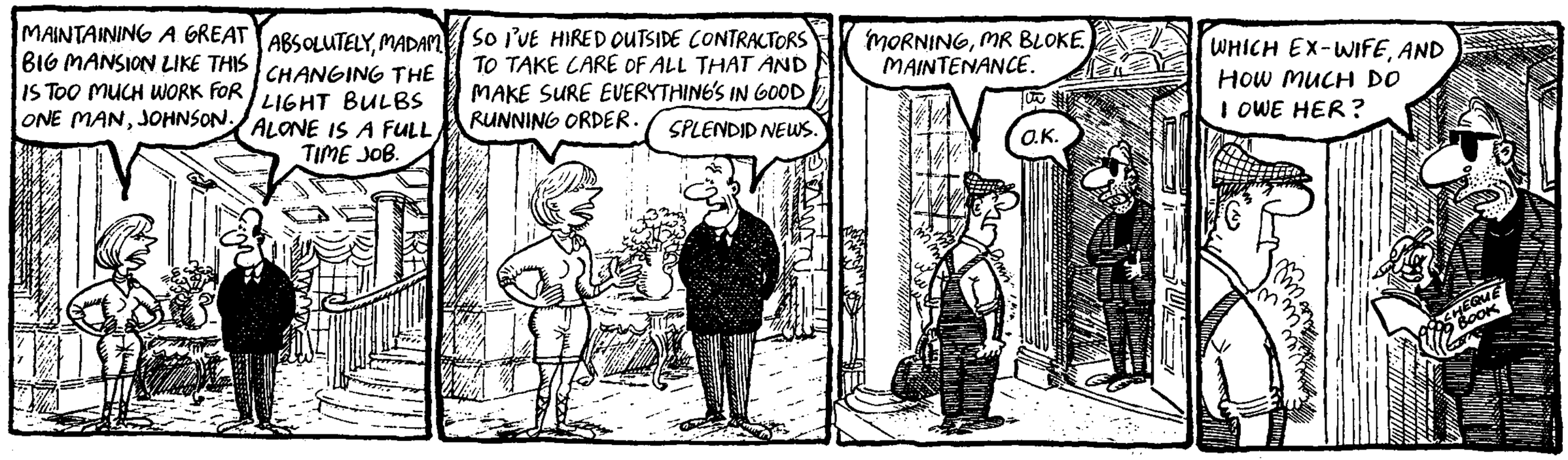
And now America, land of the free, welcomes yours truly, a political refugee from bigotry and hypocrisy, humbug and cant — and from an out-of-date country that is, methinks, hidebound by pomposity and overfilled with little people puffing themselves up in the cloaks of heroes. Ah, America, thou hast offered me fair berth! From my exclusive Manhattan apartment on fashionable 59th Street, I can look forth upon a nation that is not ruled by a smugly preening elite, a country whose leader does not — as in poor, benighted, classbound Britain — have his wife or his son inherit his position, where women and blacks are welcomed into the very heart of government, where a Jew is permitted to stand for Vice-President in a fallow year, where representatives of every single minority are welcomed with open arms into the nation's thrillingly-designed and increasingly popular state penitentiaries, and where a poor man is not allowed to die in the streets, just so long as he has adequate health insurance. And as for Harry Potter, that anachronistic dead-weight that hangs around the ageing neck of once-great Britain — at last a number of enlightened, forward-looking American schools have taken up the cause of liberty and freedom and seen that he is banned.

Right on. After the rank, enseamed sweat of English racism, how sweet it is to breathe the air of a nation in which all the peoples of the world live and work together, hand in hand, in perfect harmony, with apple trees and honeybees and snow-white turtle doves, and hear them echo through the hills oh, peace throughout the land. It's the real thing, nearly.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER



Literary Review

Well hardback

Hard Bastards
Kate Kray
(Blake, £14.99)

AT THE time of writing Reg Kray, staked out in the terminal ward of a Norfolk hospital, was still with us. The tributes, however, had been pouring in: loved his mum, kept the East End safe and all the rest of it. Gratifyingly, one of the most substantial and long-term tributes – so long-term as to have been going on for about five years now – has been that paid by the British book trade.

You don't believe me? Well, just step inside the nearest averagely up-market bookshop and take a look at the "True Crime" section – usually a double display shelf to be found somewhere to the left of "biography". There they all are, all the old tabloid standbys: "Mad" Frankie Fraser; Roy "Pretty Boy" Shaw; Lennie "The Guv'nor" Mclean (the late Mr. Mclean played the big bald bloke in *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*); lesser lights such as "Nosher" Powell and Dave Courtney.

Such books have an infallible format: in hardback (because the middle-class thrill-seekers who buy them don't mind paying £14.99 for some really serious action); frontispiece a grinning close-up of Nosh, Tosh or whoever; beneath it the shoutline. The latter is generally pretty minatory. Thus Mr Mclean suggests that "I look what I am. A hard bastard." Nosher, on the other hand, is more exercised by deeds than appearances. "When I hit you," he gamely deposes, "you bloody well stay hit." Bless.

Though there are occasional exotic variants – Sonny Barger's hell's angel memoir, for instance, to which all the broadsheets have devoted a great many fascinated column inches – the contents of these no-nonsense *apologiae* (the wrong word, perhaps, as nobody is in the mood to apologise for anything) is painfully familiar. The bare knuckle boxing. The celebrity minding. Other hard cases (Ron and Reg a staple in any index) knocked into or, more often than not, knocked down or over. And of course true love. Hearteningly all these walking nightmares end up and are photographed with some Shirl or Tina or Vicky who'll forgive them anything and know they're just a big softie at heart. Sweet.

Or not. This month's star item, appropriately enough, as the author was unwise enough to have been married to Reg's brother, is Kate Kray's *Hard Bastards*. Here the redoubtable Mrs Kray sits down with the usual cast of horrors – Roy again; "Mad Dog" Adair, an inspired left-field choice – and asks them incredibly silly questions about whom they "admire" and so on. And in case you might be disposed to question the resultant dogged litanies of self-justification, Mrs K is on hand to supply personal testimony. When a homely colloquy with a gentlemen named "Cornish Mick" is interrupted by some coat-chasing loudmouth, for example, Mick simply pulls out a chopper and carves his face up. What a geezer, eh?

Low-life slumming of this kind has been a fixture of the book business for a good 300 years: Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*; The "Newgate novel" controversy of the late 1830s, when the early Victorian bourgeoisie got their kicks from reading about highwaymen; items such as the *Raff's Journal* (the mid-19th century equivalent of *Loaded*, apparently).

The really hilarious – or frankly scary – part of this phenomenon is neither the gravity of its catalogues of violence or the East End myth-making but the striving for a moral position. If Roy, Lennie and the others just owned up to being lumps of slight-avenging muscle you could smile and look for the nearest policeman. But no, they're all serious ethics merchants, don't you know. They want "respect"; they wouldn't hurt a fly unless that fly had taken a "diabolical liberty"; and of course – this line comes up every five pages or so – all those paedophiles and other pervs should be strung up, taken down and have their graves jumped on without delay.

Ah dear, call me an old spoilsport, but there is something horribly depressing in the thought that a proportion of nice Sir Richard Branson's profits can be traced back to Frankie's reminiscences of life amid the kitchen implements and Dave Courtney's memoirs (the one whose career inspired *Lock, Stock* you'll be pleased to know.) Needless to say, at this solemn juncture our thoughts should return to the man in the hospital bed. Ta ta Reg, old mate. You may not have done much for humanity, but the book trade is forever in your debt.

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ OLD TIMERS may claim there are no gentlemen left in publishing, but Hodder & Stoughton MD Martin Neild seems to have been doing his best to prove them wrong through his defence of overrated and overpaid author Amy Jenkins in the letters pages of various newspapers.

In May DJ Taylor had the temerity to suggest in his *Independent* column that the £600,000 doled out to Jenkins for two books before even a word of either had been written was "a disproportionate amount of money chasing an inferior product". He went on to observe that the cash could have bought up several struggling and infinitely more deserving writers.

A few days later a missive from Neild appeared, rubbishing Taylor's line of argument as "the basis of ill-informed generalities". Jenkins, Neild argued, was a "highly-talented writer", her debut novel *Honeymoon* would "almost certainly make a publishing profit", and the cash generated by her success would subsidise the "newcomers with something to say".

Unfortunately the success Neild projected didn't materialise, and last month in the *Evening Standard*, Victoria Coren pointed out that the book had shifted only 19,500 copies — a meagre return for such a heavily-hyped commodity. The 600 large ones had, she said, been "wrongly gambled". Quick as a flash, Neild was on the letters page of the *Stonedead*. Coren's figure, he said, did not factor in "book club, travel-point, supermarkets and overseas sales", and the actual sales figure was "more than 70,000 copies". This is less impressive however, when you realise that the extra 50,000 sales were achieved only by heavy discounting. Could Neild's various missives have anything to do with his desire to present the book's financial disaster in as favourable light as possible and thus avoid incurring the wrath of Hodder's infamously thrifty owners, WH Smug.

■ MICHAEL JOSEPH publicist Jamie "James" Holland's first novel for HarpicCollins, *One Thing Leads To Another*, has been attracting some oddly hyperbolic customer reviews on Amazon.co.uk lately.

One — from Ericdevaurigard@aol.com — likens Holland's prose to "listening to Ashkenazy play Rachmaninov", which is pushing it a bit for a novel about fluffy-headed urban twentysomethings and their romantic troubles. Meanwhile, Regina_b@hotmail.com describes the book as "extremeley (sic) rewarding", James_Farrell@yahoo.com argues that it "is set to becom (sic) the defining book of the decade" and Camilla_Boardman@hotmail.com plumps for "a rivetting (sic) read".

"Oh no – it's split-up"

What makes the whole matter rather curious is that Eric de Vaurigard, James Farrell, Camilla Boardman and her mother Regina are all characters in *The Drowning People* by Richard Mason, a Michael Joseph author who just happens to be a great mate of Holland's having benefited from his publicity expertise. What can it all mean?

■ RELEASED amid a flurry of controversy, Terry Wogan's autobiography Is it me? is an unsurprisingly dull recollection of the broadcaster's life and attendance at pro-am golf tournaments.

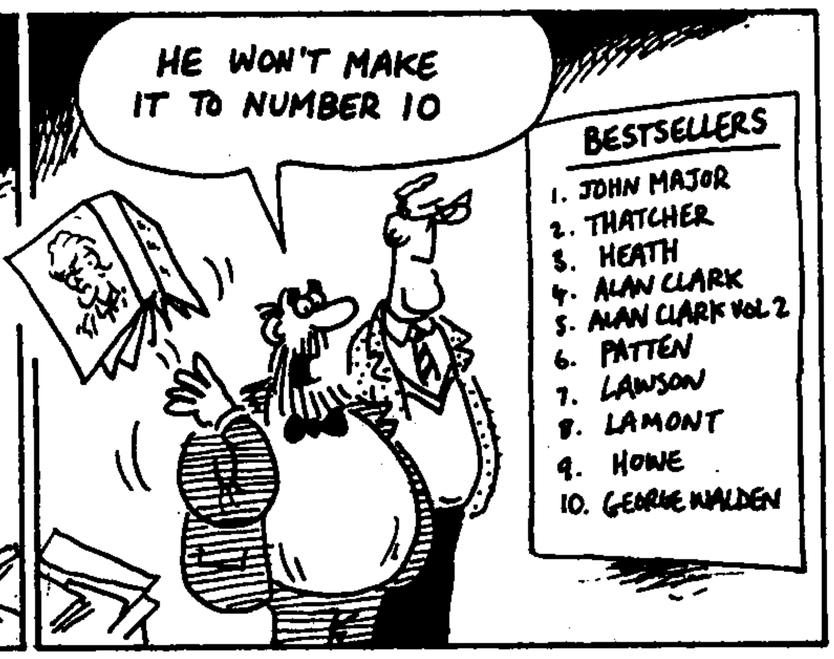
Little of consequence emerges from this lazily written book, in which, embarrassingly, the master of blarney even manages to repeat himself.

On page 167, for example, he gives his authoritative take on (yawn) the 80s soap-opera Dallas, noting that "although richer than Croesus, the Ewing family of Dallas had only one telephone – in the hall"; that they had "walk-in wardrobes, but only wire coat-hangers... that wedding receptions appeared to be held in the driveway by the garage and... characters like Miss Ellie and Digger Barnes kept getting new heads."

By page 225 Southfork had become "Millionaires' Mansion"; but it still "had only one phone, in the hall, and walk-in wardrobes with wire coat-hangers, parties were all held in the small drive and Miss Ellie changed her own head and body on at least a couple of occasions, as did another character, Digger Barnes".

Don't be surprised to see this tome selling for half price in the not too distant future...

'Bookworm'



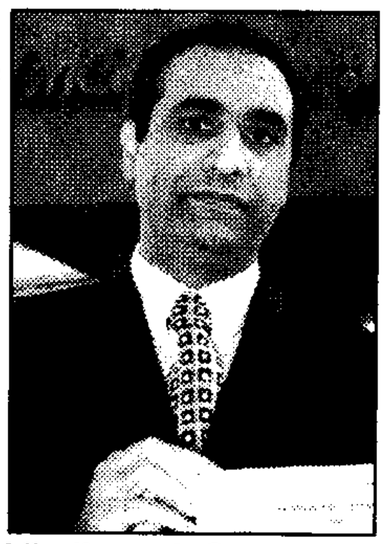
IN THE BACK

EALING FARCE

TWO years and three months after Asian police officer Gurpal Virdi was arrested and suspended from duty on charges of distributing racist hate mail to fellow officers, an employment tribunal has found that he was wrongfully accused and that he has been the subject of racial discrimination.

In March this year Sergeant Virdi, an officer in the Ealing division in west London, was sacked after an internal Metropolitan police board of inquiry found him guilty as charged. He had been arrested on 15 April 1998 under suspicion of sending out two batches of racist hate mail to fellow ethnic minority officers and civilian staff at Ealing division in December 1997 and January 1998. His home was searched for seven hours by a POLSA search team, the kind usually used for terrorist investigations.

The tribunal focused on whether Sgt Virdi did in fact print and distribute the racist documents and whether he was treated differently to the other main suspect in the case, a white female officer. Virdi, backed by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), denied throughout that he was the perpetrator of the racist literature.



Vindicated: Gurpal Virdi, ex-Met sergeant

The Met's case hinged on complex computer evidence which suggested the racist hate mail had been produced in two print runs, and that these and related documents were printed under the computer log-ins of the white officer and Virdi. The Met's evidence included a detailed set of times when Virdi was supposed to have been present at various of the three stations in the Ealing division, and whether or not there had been a breach of individual officers' passwords.

The tribunal identified several anomalies in this computer evidence, including the timing of the distribution of the letters which did not tally exactly with the supposed dates of the print runs, and the lack of evidence that Virdi possessed the necessary computer skills to have produced the documents. The tribunal concluded: "The evidence overall does not support the view that the print-runs were those of the racist hate mail... There is therefore no evidence on the balance of probabilities to show that the racist letters distributed within the Ealing Division of the Metropolitan Police in late December 1997 and early January 1998 were produced by the Applicant".

The tribunal also noted that the female officer was first interviewed on an informal basis by her line manager on 21 January 1998, and later invited to give a voluntary statement to the investigation team, which she did on 27 January 1998. In contrast Virdi was not made aware that he was a suspect until the day of his arrest. The tribunal concluded: "He was not in a position, therefore, to put himself in the same position as PC X... He was therefore clearly treated differently from PC X as regards being a suspect."

In the wake of the tribunal's verdict the Met's independent advisory group on race condemned the police internal investigation as "disgraceful" and a "high profile character assassination". The Met has now set up an independent inquiry into Virdi's case led by its chairman David Muir. Virdi's own long battle to [illegible] further. Once again backed by the CRE he has made a second application to the employment tribunal challenging his dismissal from the Met in March.

GRABBEY NATIONAL?

MORTGAGE lenders who repossessed people's homes during the last recession are suddenly chasing unsuspecting victims many years later for huge debts.

Earlier this year, via the Council of Mortgage Lenders (CML), the mortgage industry promised that it would change the rules which it claims allow lenders up to 12 years to chase a mortgage debt from repossessed housebuyers. It promised to introduce a six-year limit in line with all other legal debt.

The promise went some way to head off adverse publicity and possible government intervention over the way lenders were treating householders who had got into difficulties and handed over their keys believing that would be the end of the matter.

During the negative equity crisis lenders were selling properties on at a huge loss but not seeking to enforce the debt until they thought the hard-pushed householder would be back on his or her financial feet. But a hard-hitting report last year from the Citizens Advice Bureau questioned the legality of the action and said it was unfair to cast such a long shadow of uncertainty over people's futures. This was especially the case when there were serious questions about the actions of some of the lenders themselves in agreeing to fund over-priced houses and giving poor or misleading advice over repossession, and where there was uncertainty over whether or not the lenders had met their duty to obtain the best price for a repossessed property.

In reality, few people have benefited from the CML's voluntary six-year amnesty. This is because it did not apply to anyone who had already received correspondence from their lender over debt – no matter how long ago. Moreover, the CML's promise also seems to have triggered a spate of last minute demands from lenders anxious to get in claims before the amnesty deadline last February.

One debt victim is Mr Charlie Cozens, who bought a flat in Brighton with a £42,000 mortgage from Abbey National. In 1990, when interest payments were rocketing and his income as a self-employed taxi driver was shrinking, he voluntarily handed over his keys. Abbey National soon sold the flat for £5,000 less than Mr Cozens had borrowed. Because he had taken out mortgage insurance on behalf of Abbey, he assumed the debt was covered and in the meantime, unaware of the debt time-bomb ticking away, he married and now has two small children and a new home.

Mr Cozens heard nothing until 3 February this year – just days before the amnesty deadline and some 10 years since he had handed over his keys. With interest and bills, the Grabbey National are now demanding £14,615, which Mr Cozens cannot afford to pay.

In Luton, meanwhile, a man whose house was repossessed in 1992 by another lender was also contacted in February and told by the lender's solicitors that the action had been triggered by the CML's announcement. Another man who contacted the *Eye* said his mortgage company had refused to let him sell his property at a £5,000 loss, but then seven years later demanded more than £80,000 from him after it later sold his home for considerably less.

Meanwhile the CAB continues to gather worrying cases of shortfall debt, repossession and dubious collection tactics employed by agencies acting on behalf of some lenders: bombarding employers with letters about borrowers' debts; demanding full and final settlement sums from clients offering instalments and threatening repossession for arrears of only £500.

So far the government seems reluctant to intervene. Attempts by pressure groups to have time limits inserted into the financial services and markets bill failed. Last month, when Dr Eleanor Scott (who is being chased by the Grabbey for £17,000 after it sold her repossessed Newcastle flat for only £1,300) wrote to Stephen Byers at the department of trade setting out her concerns about the legality of lenders' actions in mortgage shortfall claims. She was referred to the CML amnesty and its voluntary code of conduct – the very things she is concerned about.

No case to test the legality of lenders' actions has ever made it to the appeal court. Perhaps keen not to have their actions under public or legal scrutiny, lenders seem to prefer to settle at the court door, often for a fraction of their initial demands. One court case that did go ahead stacked the cards even further in favour of the lender, however. One man who suddenly found himself in debt to his bank tried to counterclaim that his repossessed property had been sold undervalue. This was struck out because his claim fell outside the six-year debt cut-off deadline.

Judged dredger

ROYAL Boskalis Westminster, one of the world's largest dredging companies, boasts of its record on safety and good working practices. "The policy... is to ensure that all employees can do their work in safe and healthy circumstances. Preventing dangerous and unhealthy conditions is a central feature of this policy," its website claims.

All of which comes as a surprise to seafarer Denis Saunders, who blew the whistle on what he described as the company's "appalling and potentially fatal disregard of basic safety standards" only to be rewarded with the sack.

Eleven years after the dredger Bowbelle struck and sank the Marchioness riverboat on the Thames, killing 51 people, Saunders told an employment tribunal of an apparently similarly cavalier attitude to safety by Westminster Dredging, a division of the Dutch-owned Boskalis.

Mr Saunders, 50, from Harwich, Essex, was employed by the company last September to work on the Pluto, a barge used for transporting rock and debris from the seabed to deepen the approach to Felixstowe, one of the UK's busiest ports.

Shortly after starting work he complained to managers about a series of basic safety faults on the 60-metre vessel — in particular its lack of power, which meant that in rough conditions it "would start to flounder with the decks awash". He feared it could float into the path of one of the many passenger ferries in the area. (Pluto's sister ship, the Expo, collided with a small angling vessel near Harwich last year).

Both the Portuguese-flagged Pluto and the Expo had been hired by Westminster Dredging to help complete the final stages of the massive Felixstowe excavation. However, Mr Saunders claimed the barges lacked sufficient power to cope on the high seas and were more suited for work in inland waters.

After concerns expressed by the harbour master at Harwich that the barges were going to sea in too rough weather, the company agreed to return the barges to port when the wind speed exceeded 25 knots. But Mr Saunders says this restriction was flouted. "On one occasion we were forced to continue work in a Force 8 gale," he said.

Given the inherent danger in using these barges in high seas, it might have been expected that additional safety measures would have been introduced. But on the Pluto, Mr Saunders claimed, the anchor and the bilge pumps didn't work properly. Adding to the risk, shift changes took place at sea, forcing men to leap from one vessel to another in swells of up to two metres.

Instead of listening to his complaints, says Mr Saunders, managers made him redundant. The company denied Mr Saunders claims. But in June the employment tribunal in Bury St Edmunds decided that the seafarer had been made redundant because he was a whistleblower. His compensation for losing his job (but pointing out the potential for a serious accident) has just been fixed at a miserable £3,250 — because Boskalis, which also boasts that it "gives pride of place to its employees", had only employed him on a temporary basis.

As the *Eye* went to press, no one at Boskalis was able to answer questions.

I.T. HITS THE FAN

AFTER each new computing disaster under the private finance initiative (PFI) scheme, ministers rush out statements promising there will be no repetition of mistakes. But even as they do so and denounce the old blunders, the same ministers are paving the way for new ones.

On 18 August the national audit office (NAO) published its damning report into the cancellation of the benefits payment card in May 1999, which cost the Post Office £571m and caused a great deal of humiliation at the department of social security. The auditor general Sir John Bourn commented: "Some risks, such as the delivery of benefit payments on which many people depend, are too great for the private sector to absorb. Departments therefore must retain a direct interest and involvement in how the service is to be delivered."

Though nominally the private firms will pay the price if a system does not work, in reality some products are so sensitive the government will always cough up if they go awry. In the benefits cards fiasco the DSS was twice entitled to charge provider Pathway, a subsidiary of computer company ICL, for damages. But the NAO report reveals that: "The purchasers (DSS and the Post Office) did not in the end demand damages from Pathway when the project began to slip. They felt this would not encourage Pathway to succeed and could deflect the firm's attention away from delivery to a legal battle." Hence ICL never paid for its failure because the government was worried it might result in the whole scheme collapsing... which it did anyway.

The DSS has still not learnt its lesson. One of the department's most memorable IT disasters was the £600m computer system for the Child Support Agency developed by EDS, which was scrapped half-way through a 10-year contract in 1997. This difficult decision was reached after problems with the system led to incorrect assessments and a backlog of 350,000 cases, even though it was unclear how EDS would be compensated if the system were replaced as the government was contracted to the firm until 2003.

This obstacle was surmounted when the DSS announced on 8 August that it has awarded the £200m contract to redevelop the CSA system to the Affinity consortium led by, er, EDS.

● MEANWHILE A lack of "joined-up" thinking at the inland revenue means yet another PFI looks likely to cost taxpayers dear. In May 1995 the contributions agency awarded the tender to computerise and maintain national insurance contribution records to Andersen Consulting, which won the nine-year contract having pitched its bid substantially lower than competitors, including arch-rival EDS.

The main reason Andersen pitched its bid so low was that it foresaw that if successful it would own the intellectual property rights to the system, which it estimated to be worth £100m. Having seen off rivals, however, things did not at first go smoothly for Andersen, which was forced to pay £4.1m compensation to the contributions agency for delays during the period 1996-98.

In April 1999 responsibility for NI contribution records transferred from the contributions agency to the inland revenue, whose lead supplier for the tax system is, er, EDS. Realising that the inland revenue had two rival companies developing two independent, non-compatible computer systems, one for tax and one for national insurance, the government decided that Andersen should be let off paying compensation for breaches of its contract since 1998. Or, as Dawn Primarolo, the paymaster-general, recently put it: "Taking further action against Andersen Consulting would prejudice the partnership relationship now established between it and the inland revenue."

However, the root cause of Primarolo's deference to Andersen can be explained by the realisation of what could happen if Andersen lost the contract for national insurance records when it comes up for renewal in 2004 — say to EDS. As the 31st report of the public accounts committee makes clear, it looks as though Andersen has the government by the balls. Giving evidence to the committee, Elisabeth Astall, a partner of Andersen Consulting, confirmed that even if Andersen failed to win the renewal of the contract the intellectual property rights would remain with the firm unless an offer was forthcoming which matched the value Andersen placed on them. Astall also confirmed that besides demanding £100m for the intellectual property rights, Andersen would also expect to receive an additional £14m for the software it has developed. All courtesy of the taxpayer.

DOWN THE TUBE

AFTER investing £2.5m over three years in "Routes", a project to set up an internet journey planner for the capital, Transport for London (TfL, formerly London Transport) has decided not to bother after all and to provide a link to London Underground's travel information website instead.

Although London Underground will be incorporated into TfL next year, it is currently a separate body. Having lost faith in TfL's promised combined journey planner for tube train and bus, earlier this year London Underground approached a private company, Transport Information Systems (TIS), to construct a separate journey planner just for the underground.

At the same time, under pressure from its board, which is chaired by mayor Ken Livingstone and was demanding to see the promised journey planner, TfL *also* approached TIS. While Routes, already in use at the TfL call centre, provides the wrong information for given destinations, TIS, which has constructed similar systems in Berlin, Vienna and Zurich, came up with a fully functional combined journey planner within six weeks.

The humiliation was too much to bear for TfL's IT department. Still ignorant of London Underground's own separate venture, they asked TIS to build two separate systems for tube and train, while bus information would be listed in static form only. When London Underground finally revealed details of its separate contract with TIS at the end of August, it provided TfL with the perfect solution. It could establish an internet link to the tube information system and fulfil its pledge to provide an interactive journey planner, while maintaining the fiction to politicians that the combined planner in which it had invested so much time and money was an impossibility, hence saving embarrassment all round.

Knowledge quiz

MEANWHILE one of the first issues the Transport for London (TfL) board might care to examine is why it is taking so long to put in place legislation for licensing mini-cabs which was passed by parliament two years ago. Responsibility for implementing the private hire vehicles act 1998 lies with the Public Carriage Office (PCO), formerly run by the Metropolitan Police but now under TfL's jurisdiction. Some in the taxi trade believe the PCO is dragging its heels because it is devoting a significant proportion of its time and effort to a completely different matter: reviewing "the knowledge".

The PCO is currently considering how to modernise the lengthy process by which black cab drivers learn the streets of central London. But some fear that modernisation could mean cutting the time it takes to acquire "the knowledge" from two years to just three months. Such a move of course would delight the taxi manufacturers, because thousands more cabbies would gain their licences every year, causing sales of black cabs to soar.

The company with a virtual monopoly on building black cabs is London Taxis International, a subsidiary of Manganese Bronze, which manufactures the new standard TX1 model. If the PCO does decide to introduce a "quickie" knowledge, former Tory transport minister Steve Norris, who now sits on the board of TfL, might be forced to declare an interest. His running mate in his failed bid to become mayor of London was Victoria Borwick, wife of Manganese Bronze chief executive Jamie Borwick.

The PCO is no stranger to conflict of interest. The office is responsible for approving the various parts that are fitted inside London black cabs. One gadget it has passed recently is a navigation system, which will be fitted by a group of companies comprising Lucas Navigation Systems, Lucas Taxi Meters and Taxitronic Taximeters.

The chief executive of Lucas and Taxitronic, Tony Palester, insists the system is not intended to replace the knowledge; it is merely a "supplementary aid". Lucas and Taxitronic will be assisted in their new venture by a consultant who has just joined the group, Bob Taylor. Taylor has an intimate understanding of the taxi trade gained in his last job as, er, the senior technical officer for the Public Carriage Office.

Open and closed case

"I THINK greater openness which I am anxious to achieve... in explaining ourselves to people on individual decisions will actually go a long way to allaying public concern." So said David Calvert-Smith, the director of public prosecutions (DPP), in reply to quizzing by the home affairs select committee last May about the quality of decision-making within the crown prosecution service (CPS).

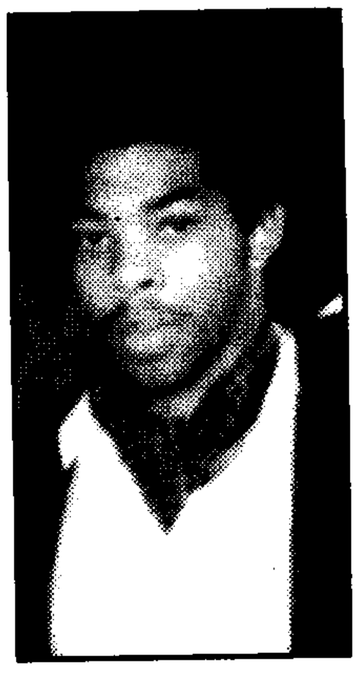
Strange then that he has been doing his hardest to avoid openness in the case of Alton Manning, the 33-year-old prisoner who died in Blakenhurst prison, near Redditch, after a struggle with and restraint by several prison officers.

An inquest jury decided in March 1998 that Manning had been "unlawfully killed" and the coroner referred the case to the DPP for consideration having decided that the death "was likely to be due to an offence".

A year later the DPP announced his decision not to prosecute, saying there was insufficient evidence. The Manning family challenged the decision under judicial review, and in a landmark ruling Lord Bingham, then the lord chief justice, not only ordered Calvert-Smith to reconsider his decision but also said he would be obliged in future similar cases, where there had been unlawful killing verdicts, to give detailed reasons for his decision.

In the light of Calvert-Smith's comments to the select committee, and with the human rights act coming into force (highlighting the state's responsibility to ensure the right to life of those in custody), one would have thought the DPP might have welcomed the ruling. But no: he spent more taxpayers' money seeking leave to take the case to the House of Lords on a point of law, arguing that the lord chief justice's justification for the duty to explain a decision not to prosecute was "invalid and spurious", and his intervention a wrongful extension of the confines of judicial review.

Fortunately Lord Bingham and Mr Justice Morrison threw out the application. But the DPP's action does not inspire the Manning family with confidence that he will reconsider the case with an open mind.



Alton Manning, unlawfully killed at Blakenhurst prison

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

THE twin facts that the national lottery commission wants Sir Richard Branson to prove that he has the financial muscle to guarantee all pay-outs by his People's Lottery and that he did not immediately proffer a personal cheque for the mere £50m required shows how fanciful are the grinning pullover's acolytes' claims to multi-billionaire status.

They also demonstrate the legitimate concerns generated by the tax driven structure of the Virgin empire which has relied on Branson exercising influence rather than control in order to prevent his Labour friends from taking a giant tax bite.

Branson has emphasised that the People's Lottery is ring-fenced from the rest of the Virgin group with its propensity for making losses not profits. That itself speaks volumes about the image the City and others have of Branson and his myriad ventures. It is also a tacit acceptance that without such an assurance there would be those who might suspect the People's Lottery could become the lender of last resort to Virgin rather than the other way round.

Those who would convey billionaire status to Branson – like the *Sunset Times* rich list — conveniently ignore the liabilities of his private empire. Liabilities which cannot be reduced by going to the stock market for new money. Liabilities dependent on partners or bank lending. Liabilities which only a few months ago created what appeared to some, however wrongly, to be a "can't pay, won't pay" stand-off with the record company creditors of Virgin's ailing Our Price chain.

This may explain why the lottery commission is concerned about Branson's ability to be backer of last resort for the People's Lottery given the demands of the continuing loss-making Virgin companies in circumstances where he is not the owner of the profitable Virgin companies or their bank balances. That role is held by the offshore trusts which control Virgin on behalf of the Branson family. The trusts — based in the Channel Islands and owning Virgin via companies in the British Virgin Islands — are assumed to be self-settlement trusts which give Branson a life tenancy interest in their income but put the capital under the control of independent trustees.

£ £ £

SUCH trusts were popular in the 70s and 80s because of their ability to shield settlors from capital gains tax on asset sales. This was undoubtedly very helpful for Branson when he sold his record business for £510m in 1992 realising more than £200m offshore.

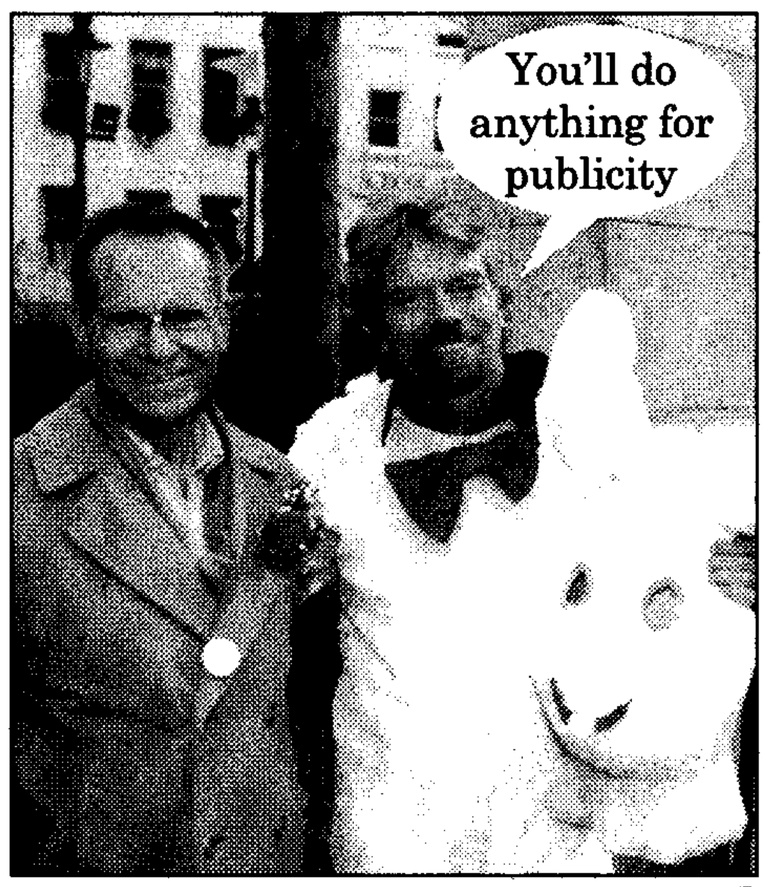
These type of trusts had effectively been banned the previous year, but thankfully for Branson not retrospectively. They then became what were known as "golden trusts" until the row over Geoffrey Robinson's little offshore earner resulted in all their tax advantages for UK residents being removed by Labour in 1998. Now they are fully UK taxable on any gains or income, which suggests there could have been a £200m capital gains tax bill from Branson's £600m sale of 49 percent of Virgin Atlantic Airlines to Singapore Airlines in March. However, should Branson ever decide to become non-UK resident then any future sales or income would be UK tax free.

The control of the trustees means Branson cannot simply guarantee the £50m or produce a cheque for that amount from the trusts. He has to request and cannot demand money from the trustees. The trustees, however, are expected if not obligated to comply with his requests. But what if the request was for backing which jeopardised the interests of the other family beneficiaries? What if, for whatever reason, the trustees declined or delayed complying with a Branson request? And as the trustees control the assets, they too would have to go along with any bank guarantee for £50m. Branson's own guarantee might not be good enough unless he could deliver the underlying assets.

It is these understandable concerns which would appear to lie behind the commission's unpreparedness to accept that supposed double billionaire Branson was good for the £50m. They may also suggest why Branson is so keen that suppliers to his lottery should share the £50m burden.

£ £ £

THE commission was no doubt also unimpressed by the failure of various Virgin ventures to justify the Branson hype, plus the financial frailty exposed by the Our Price cash crisis earlier this year which was only solved by the Singapore deal. That showed history repeating itself. Branson was forced to sell Virgin Records to EMI to finance his ambitions for



the airline in the face of the serious cash crisis he now admits Virgin faced in 1991. Now he has sold half of his "cash cows" Virgin Atlantic and Virgin Holidays to keep the rest of the show on the road.

But what does he sell now if there are future cash crises? How will he finance his share of the investment required for Virgin Rail once the taxpayer stops sending cheques and expects to receive ever increasing cheques? Mobile phones and personal finance are already joint ventures and yet to make money. The businesses Virgin solely owns — retailing, records, drinks — continue to lose money.

£ £ £

SHAREHOLDERS in Victory Corporation — like passengers on Virgin Rail — have good reason to dispute Branson's ability to run a business successfully for the public's benefit.

Victory was floated at 58p in 1996 when investors put up £45m. The shares are now 3p. Acquiring full control of the Virgin jeans and cosmetics businesses and becoming a Virgin subsidiary has done nothing to stop the rot. Losses to last September total a wallet-numbing £47m. The final figures for the year to March are already late —they were disclosed in July last year leading to suspicions that Branson did not want any further embarrassment before the commission's decision — and are not expected to contain any good news.

According to the 1996 prospectus, by now Victory was supposed to have made more than £2m for the year to last March and be on its way to an £11m profit this year. Instead the half year loss was almost £9m. Little evidence here of the claimed Midas touch of Britain's favourite entrepreneur or his fellow People's Lottery director and deputy chairman John Jackson, who took over as Victory's acting chief executive in 1998.

Branson has already been scarred by the continuing losses at the only other publicly quoted Virgin company, Virgin Express. The cut-price airline's losses so far this year are £12m. The total for the year could be double. Virgin Express shares launched at $15 in 1997 are now $2.5.

The Virgin Express half year figures came out the week before the lottery commission announced its vote for Branson. Such timing was unavoidable as the airline is listed on the NASDAQ market and US regulations set strict timetables for disclosing financial information. London is lax which is why Victory can be late in filing — bad figures always take longer to add up than good ones.

But these external pressures indicate why Branson does not like the disciplines imposed by public companies. Public companies can be pressured under risk of losing their listing to produce their results. Branson bought back shares in Virgin Group in 1990 after an unhappy four-year experience with its flotation and the financial transparency this required.

Virgin private companies file accounts that are usually so historic (though not in breach of company law) to be useless in revealing current finances. Virgin Direct, which owns the insurance and unit trust business, has yet to produce accounts beyond 1998 yet is handling millions of investors' funds. The 1999 accounts for other Virgin companies, even the profitable ones such as Virgin Atlantic Airlines, were filed almost a year after the year end.

The UK parent for the airline, Virgin Atlantic Limited, signed off its accounts in September 1999; but these were not filed at Companies House until April this year — post the Singapore sale. The Virgin Retail group companies did not sign off their January 1999 or July 1998 accounts until hours after, allowing for the time difference, on the same March day the Singapore cheque was handed over, suggesting that without that cash injection auditors KPMG might have had to qualify their report even more than they did.

Those playing the People's Lottery had better hope Branson's predictions about making millionaires proves more on the money than they have for investors in Victory Corporation or Virgin Express and that the results for the lottery company are filed quickly and transparently.

All of which makes it unsurprising that the lottery commission is looking for some substantial guarantees. But given those concerns it is open to debate as to why — other than to remove the tainted GTECH from the equation – it should consider Branson with his recent business record more of a sure thing. After all, imagine the angst amongst his friends in Labour high places if the Blair-honoured Branson was forced to admit that the national lottery, like Virgin Rail, was in the bearded wonder's own immortal verdict, "fucked".

'Slicker'

Number crunching

500

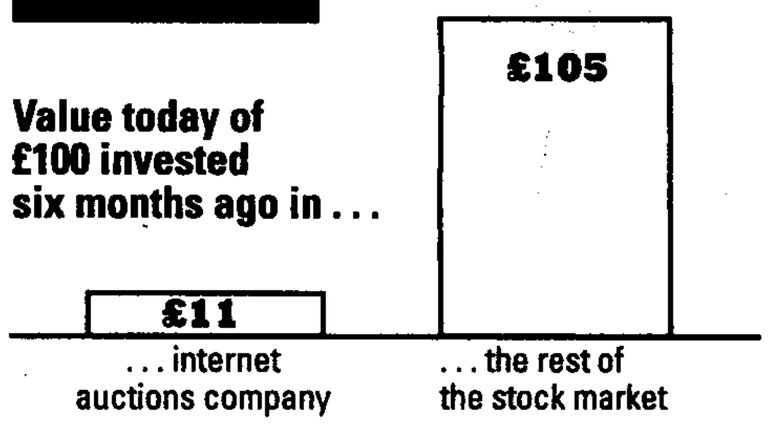
Number of directors of leading UK companies who have seen their pay rise by more than

500

thousand pounds in the last year

Stock Horror

QXL.com – going once, going twice...



"Sorry kids... we can't keep you any more; you're completely unprofitable"

Saab vs. wysiwyg

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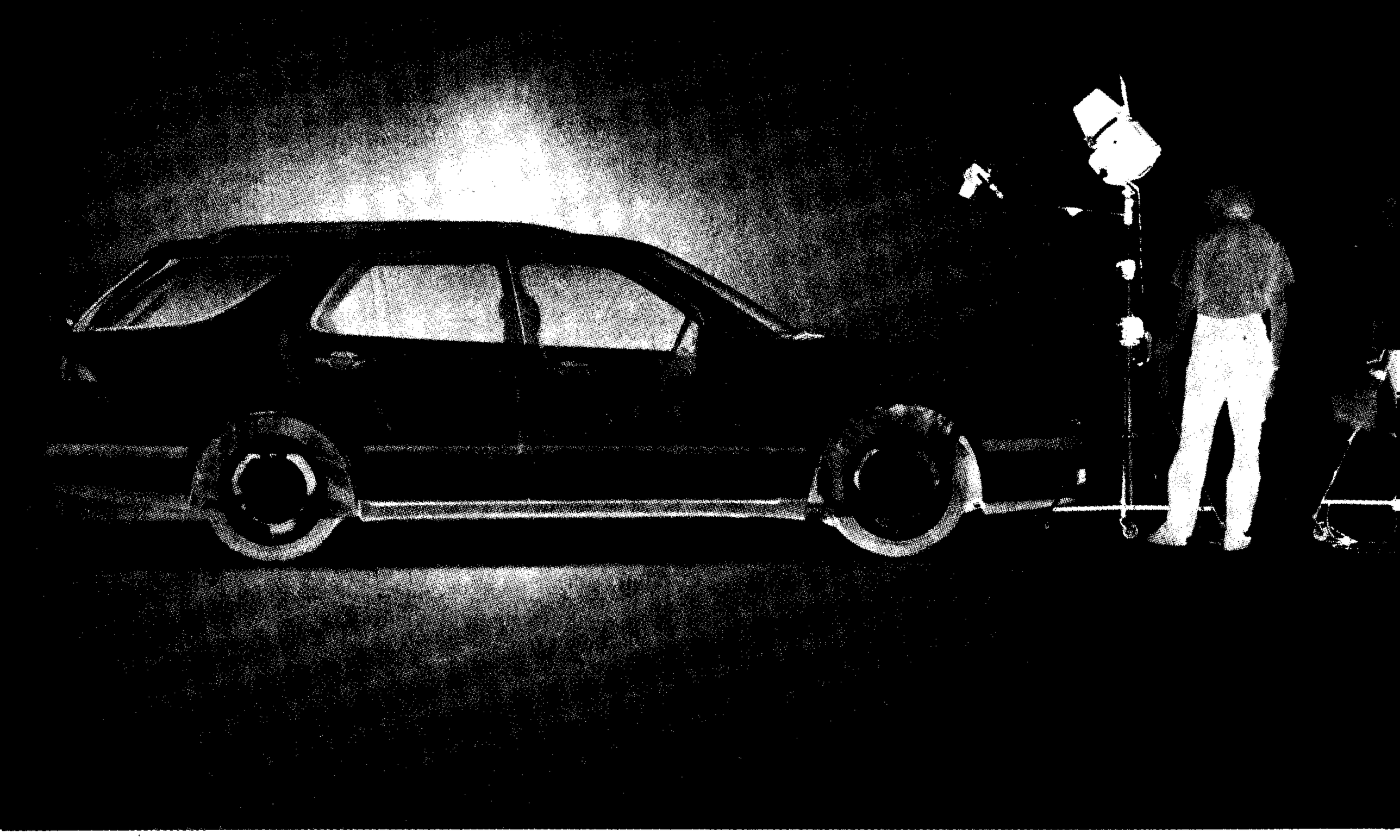

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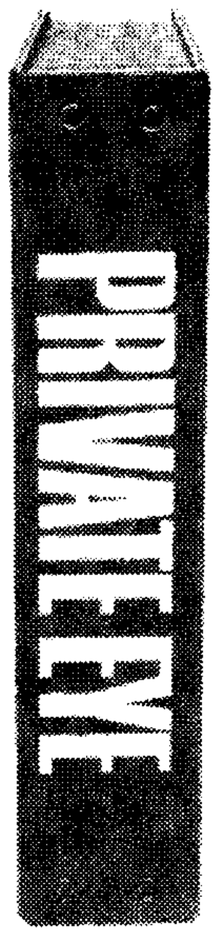

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YOUNG LADIES worldwide seek penpals, friends, lifemates. Free details, photos! HERMES, Box 610188/S, 10922 Berlin, Germany. Fax: 0049 30 25299775.

ATTACHED? Seeking romance? Call David at LOVING LINKS 020 7602 8727. Info line 0906 550 1361 (£1 per/min) – www. lovinglinks.co.uk.

EYE-COMPANY

CAN'T FACE another British winter? Let me help! M, 21 looking for female travel companion to stop shopping and start living. Any destinations considered. Box 2010.

ARE YOU FEMALE, 25-40, Funny, Footloose and Fancy-Free to travel around France for a Fortnight with a Food and wine photo-journalist? If so, email footloose_in_france@hotmail.com

I WOULD LOVE to find a stylish, sexy, no smoking lady to share one of life's great adventures. I'm a prosperous male, 40 something, with about 5 weeks to spare from mid Dec onwards. I intend to tour round the world, club class and 5 star of course, but only in the company of a certain someone. Interested? Yes? Then send me as much info on yourself as you dare. (I'm definitely not shockable!!) I will answer all replies. Box 1510.

A WED/THUR afternoon treat in London – gallery, stroll, theatre? No physical contact expected. Treater: philanthropic mule, 54, 5'9". Treatee: gentle lady who would like some attention, 35-50 attractive inside and out, non-smoker – vgsoh essential. Box 0610.

EYE ESCAPE

GOING TO INDIA? Must check out http://members.netscapeonline.co.uk/teblu

THE SMALLEST COTTAGE in Sussex... probably! 'Pooh Bear Country'. Sleeps 2. Brochure 01634 813289.

AFRICAN ADVENTURES 3-20 weeks camping tours. Best value sightseeing & game-watching – www.phoenixexpeditions.co.uk Brochureline 01509 881818.

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EYE FLY

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WORLDWIDE LOWEST prices – allegedly! Tel: 01942 603599 / 680268. Agents ATOL holders – www.gl-flights.com

FLIGHT OPTIONS – telephone booking service. Tel: 01432 851062, Fax: 01432 850722, HENRY ROGERS, ATOL 3793.

EYE LOVE

FUN LADY – fit, fabulous and fifty – seeks free male in Central Scotland with fantastic faculties. Photo please. Box 1310.

PROFESSIONAL FEMALE, 33, tall, slim, attractive – likes footie, food, wine and walking – seeks similar male, North West. Box 1910.

SOLEMATE NEEDED for wounded businessman and semi-pro guitarist with prospects and trappings (thatched listed house in Bucks, own company, etc) but no-one special to share them with. A very young and fit fiftyish – seeking smart, broadminded intelligent n/s lady with gsoh who enjoys life to the full, aged 35-45. Box 0210.

CIVILISED GENTLEMAN, 60, wltm for lunch, stylish lady who enjoys wearing stockings and suspenders. London / Bucks / South East. Box 0110.

IF U R A HORNY attractive lady 23-42 I need U. Me 47 divorced (years) discreet, nice life style. Tel: 07771 881855.

JACK NICHOLSON seeks Honor Blackman. Suave, solvent, patrician, widower, fiftyish – seeks pretty girl with good figure for mutually amusing and rewarding adventure. Nidgel@excite.com or Box 1210.

INTELLIGENT, UNHAPPILY married M42, wltm lady for romance. Berkshire/London – peyead@hotmail.com – Box 2410.

SPIRITUAL AND SEXUAL partner wanted by good-looking, young-looking, tallish, greenish, single, 43 y.o. London-based man. Photo welcome. Box 1101.

TALL, SLIM, EDUCATED, good-looking wench seeks single guy over 35 – Terpsichore100@hotmail.com

ARTS ANGEL (passes for 58) invites appreciative arts addict (probably brunette, 25-50) to aesthetic delights and lots of laughter! LTR? (Photo please.) Box 1710.

MALE, 53, tied, seeks stockinged lady for discreet lunches, fun and afternoon delights. W.Mids. Box 1810.

ATTRACTIVE, EDUCATED black girl, 27 years, enjoys classical music, politics – seeks sincere, liberal, attractive male with dry wit. Box 1610.

INTELLIGENT, creative handsome tall, dark, sensitive – seeks fun loving English belle. Box 0109.

ARE YOU A WOMAN 23-29 looking for a relationship? I am 30-year-old company dictator based in the midlands who is looking for a meaningful relationship. If you have a restless nature and like to go a bit mad, send your details to Box 1808 or email woman@streetmonkey.co.uk

ATTACHED 39 YEAR OLD male architect seeks attractive lady to share love, lust and laughter. Box 3109.

NICE GUY, attached, 35, seeks illicit liaisons. Discretion guaranteed – superchap2000@hotmail.com

YOUNG MALE bottom seeks strong female hand. Famous author. London. Box 0810.

EXPLORE 50, tangling with darker undercurrents of secret self, seeks lady for occasional clandestine adventures – always returning to the fold stirred but not shaken. Berkshire otk@cwcom.net – Box 1410.

THE THEATRES, cafés and hillsides are full. That's it then – unless you are a scarecrow over 50 but not over the hill. A fallen angel for a mischievous devil, well into sin, prefers hot sport. Beach bars and temptation to country walks. There's life after alimony. Trailer trash still welcome. Box 2110.

"MRS ROBINSON" (slim, blonde and attractive mid-40s) wishes to spoil exuberant young graduate with significant potential. Exciting and alluring further educational opportunity. Please send cv and vital statistics. London/Home Counties. Box 2610.

EYE SOLDIER

ARMY OFFICER, 32, Hampshire based, seeks lady friend 25-45. Box 0510.

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Published by Pressdram Ltd, 6 Carlisle St, London W1D 3BN. 020 7437 4017. Printed by East End Offset Ltd, Empson St, London E3 3LT. Distributed by P. E. Distribution Ltd, Mortimer Hse, 230/236 Lavender Hill, SW11 1LE 020 7223 9971